The UNESCO Courier

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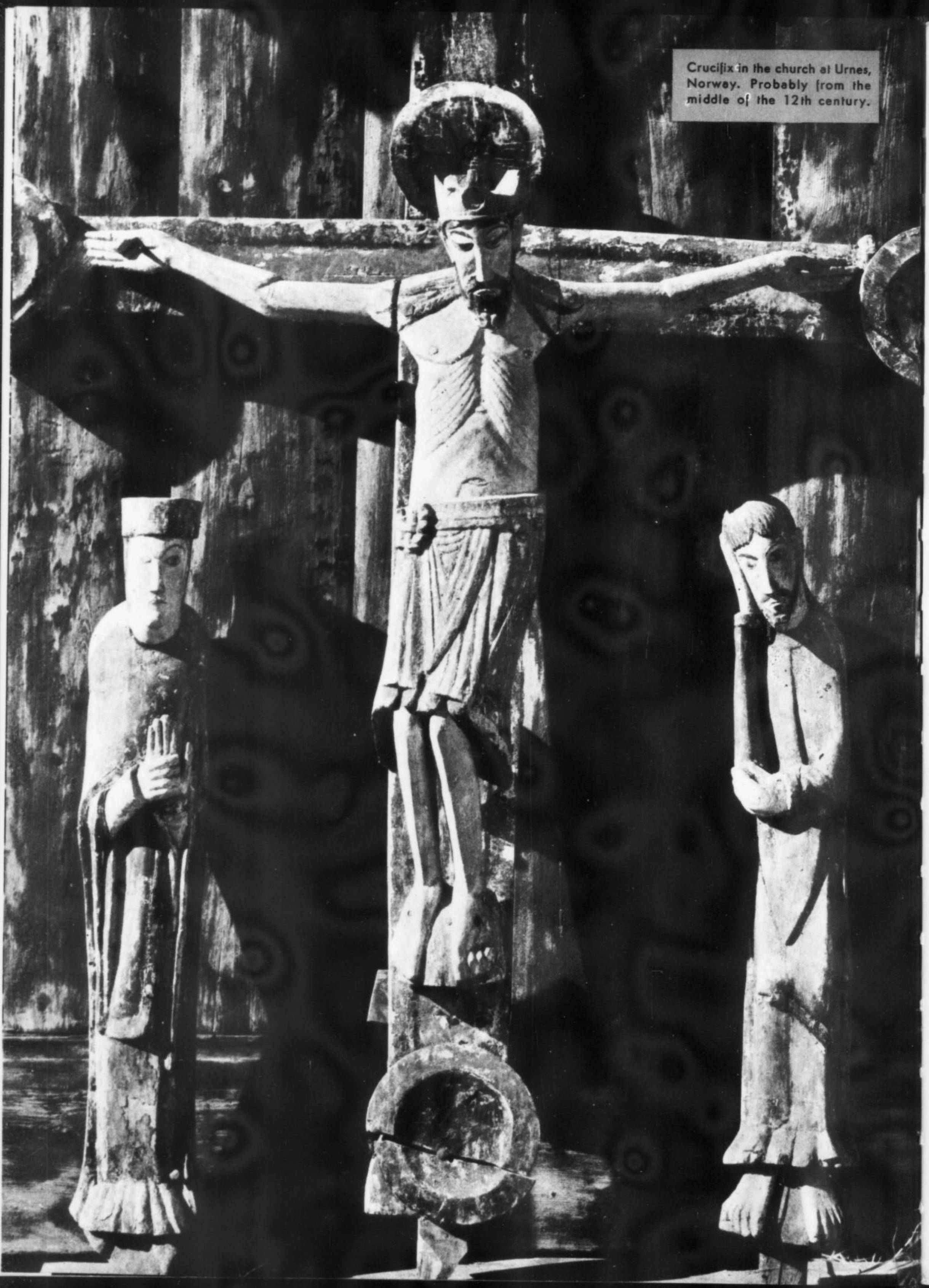
RARE MASTERPIECES OF WORLD ART



Crucifix in the church at Urnes, Norway. Probably from the middle of the 12th century.

The UNESCO Courier

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Little Known Works of the World's Art

Girl musicians and dancers performing at a feast. Fresco painted on tomb of Nakht, an Egyptian nobleman buried in the Valley of the Kings, part of the necropolis of ancient Thebes. Painting reproduced from the Unesco World Art Series album, "Egypt Paintings from Tombs and Temples."

It is a brave man who attempts to "define" art, though countless thinkers and artists have spoken and written about its nature and its mystery. Mankind's craving for art is so fundamental that it has existed continuously since pre-historic days. All that we know of early man, except what may be gleaned from his bones, is learned from his crafts and arts. These reveal man's constant urge to add something beyond pure utility to his tools—to give them aesthetic form, and to adorn and decorate them.

Art may mean different things to different people. To Aristotle it suggested the formulation of an aesthetic theory; to Spengler the reflection of a civilization. Tolstoy called it "an outcry for communion between men." The French thinker, Elie Faure, once went so far as to say that "art is not simply useful; after bread, it is the only really useful thing there is."

Whether art is "useful" or simply a source of great enjoyment is unimportant here. The enjoyment or appreciation of art, however, is something like fashion: it can change with time and place. But the avenues are open to all. Some require no training whatever, others demand previous experience or knowledge, or both. But the richest satisfaction will come to those who have the closest contact with art.

Unesco has set itself the mission of increasing the number of these contacts on the postulate that the arts are meant for everyone and that no obstacle, either economic, social or political, should prevent their diffusion. Its goal is to help make the art of each nation better known and appreciated by its own people and by the peoples of other lands, and through this greater appreciation and knowledge to encourage international understanding and respect for other nations and their cultures. Unesco co-operates with governments in the protection of works of art; it supports artists, critics and scholars in their endeavours to achieve international co-operation and mutual aid, and helps in the defence of their professional interests.

An International Society for Education through Art was created in 1953 under Unesco's auspices to improve methods of teaching the arts in schools and to promote the appreciation of art by the general public. In the past five years Unesco has been arranging travelling exhibitions of reproductions of great works of art to make these masterpieces available to a wide public not only in capital cities but in small towns, village halls, schools and local museums in countries throughout the world.

Unesco has encouraged private publishers to raise the standard of colour reproductions, and every two years issues two catalogues of the best reproductions now available. In 1954, the "Unesco World Art Series" was launched to bring within the reach of artists, teachers, students and the wide art-loving public the finest quality colour reproductions of masterpieces of art which hitherto have been known only to a limited few. Each volume in this collection is

A PATH TO GREAT ENJOYMENT *(Cont'd)*

devoted to a particular art monument or period of art in a Unesco member state.

This issue of the UNESCO COURIER presents examples in colour and in black and white of the art of Norway, India, Egypt, Australia and Yugoslavia, taken chiefly from the Unesco art series. An unbridgeable gulf may appear at first to separate the tombs of ancient Egypt from the stave churches of Norway, or the aboriginal art of Australia from the medieval frescoes of Yugoslavia, and all of these from the *Boddhisatvas* in the depths of India's Ajanta caves. Yet all of these masterpieces have an underlying unity: they are part of man's highest expression of religious art and bear witness to his highest aesthetic aspirations. They bring out not only the artistic traditions of the past but make vivid the life of those far-off times. In all these works, history becomes human and living and is not merely a record of some distant age which we can hardly understand. As the Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti said in explaining the remarkable spirit of brotherhood linking the artists of all times, "the purpose of art is to gain access to the inviolable secret of creative divinity."

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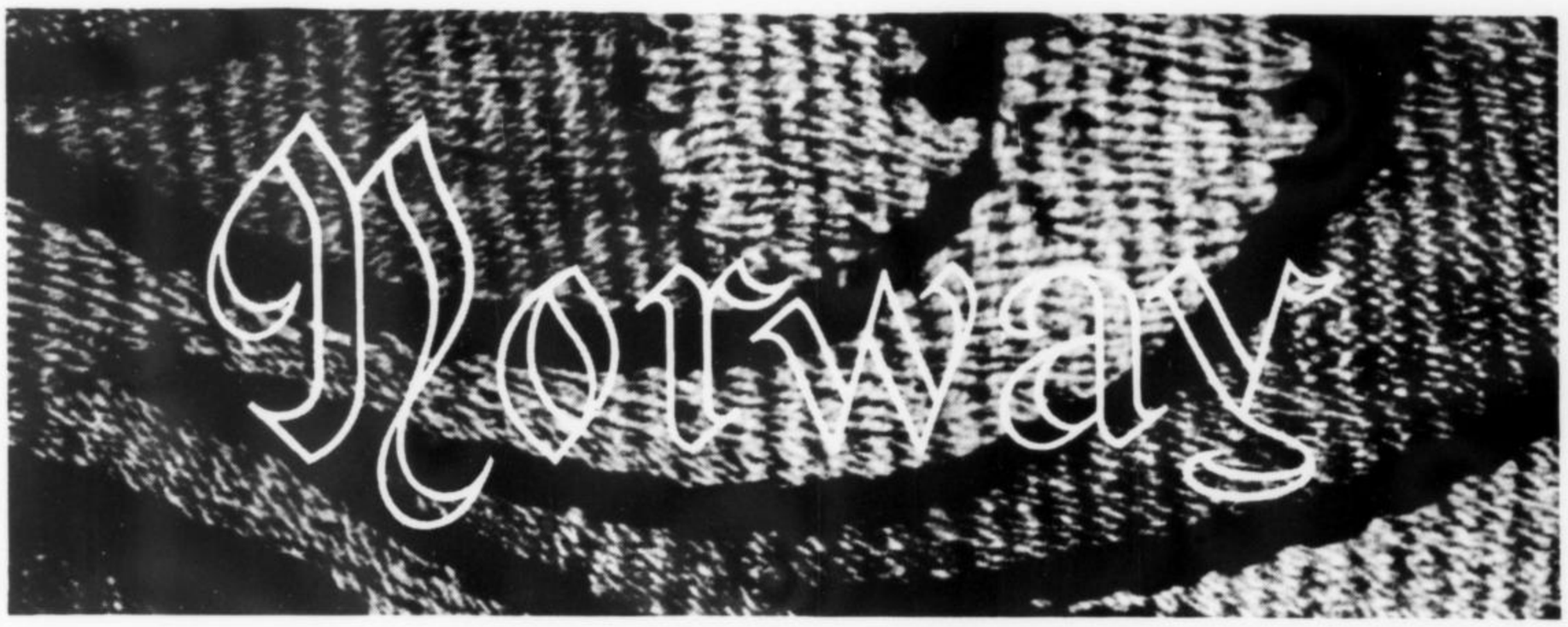


Suffering and Triumph in Wood

"Christ on the cross", a 13th century wood carving. Serenity of expression is characteristic of similar works of this period. Suffering is always controlled joys always subdued. (Oslo University Museum of Antiquities.)

NORWAY'S *Stavkirker* (stave churches) are medieval masterpieces in wood which never fail to surprise visitors from abroad. These all-wood churches take their name from the staves—massive upright timbers—which are a basic part of their construction.

But what really impresses the newcomer to the Norwegian scene is the strong resemblance these churches bear to giant trees. The "stave church", wrote Anders Bugge, a Norwegian art specialist,* "stands rooted in the floor of the valley, with all the majestic isolation of a huge fir, with the dragon head carvings reaching out like branches and the spire, to crown all, pointing to the sky, while weathered shingle, like layers of branches one above the other, encloses the holy shrine."

Built entirely of wood and having a form so suggestive of a tree, the stave churches could serve as a symbol of Norway itself, with its vast pine and spruce forests. Wood is available there in almost unlimited quantities and has always been a widely used building material—one which Norwegians have always known how to treat with the virtuosity of master craftsmen, in their architecture and carvings.

There was once a particular example of Norwegian wood carving which the rest of Europe came to know —and to fear—in early medieval times. This was the *drakkar*, the carved dragon's head prow on the ships of the Vikings who set out from the Scandinavian lands—Norway, Sweden and Denmark—and learned to penetrate all the greater waterways of Europe, well before the end of the 9th century A.D.

Well organized and equipped, these Vikings raided England, Ireland,

(Continued on next page)

* "Norwegian Stave Churches", Dreyers Forlag, Oslo, 1953.

The scale-covered monsters

France, Germany and Frisia. Their long, lean ships swept down to Spain and even as far as North Africa. And these expeditions were only preliminary to wider voyages through which at last even the New World became known for a time to men of Scandinavian birth.

The Vikings sailed up rivers and attacked cities; they occupied lands and established settlements. So great was their prowess as warriors that a special prayer—"From the fury of the Norsemen, Good Lord, deliver us"—was inserted in some of the litanies of the countries of the West.

It was difficult to resist the onslaughts of these sea-going warriors. They were raiders who sailed out in quest of glory, who made a fetish of courage and who disdained death because their Valhalla only prolonged the hotblooded life of a Viking hero. They even took poets with them in their vessels to write the sagas of their wars.

A Europe imbued with its Roman heritage met the civilization of an unknown land. Though the clash was violent, both Norwegians and Western Europeans alike profited by it. The Vikings and their ships terrified entire peoples and left the bitterness of sack and pillage in their wake, but they also brought the first Norwegian contribution to European culture.

It was a contribution of craftsmanship in the form of jewellery, golden spurs and arms inlaid with silver, for the Vikings looked upon their smiths as artists practising a noble profession. And literature was enriched by the sagas and legends from the northern lands.

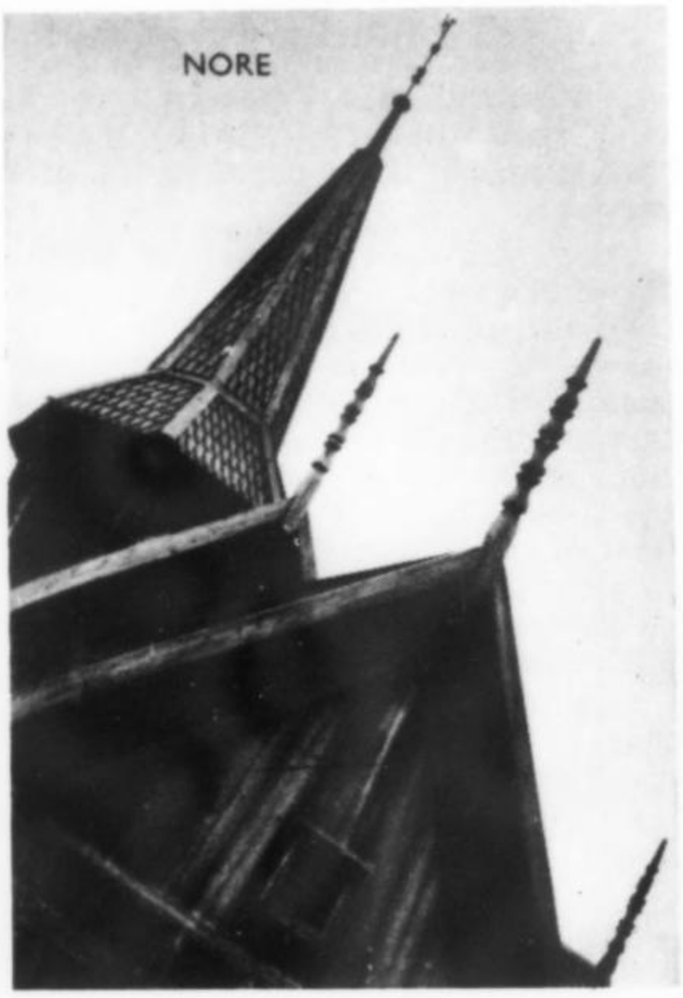
This sudden expansion of the Vikings into other parts of Europe also had its counterflow, especially following the introduction of Christianity into Norway around 1 000 A.D. when King Olav (St Olav) was working for a united and Christian country. The new religion brought with it the elements of an ancient civilization until then unknown in Norway.

Medieval art in Norway, therefore, was influenced by the opposing currents of national and foreign trends, of old traditions and new ideas. And we could hardly find a better example of this struggle than the stave churches. These have been called translations of Gothic churches into wood. As it happens they were precursors of Gothic in several technical aspects, and even if there was an element of "translation" involved, the churches are nevertheless true examples of a national art.

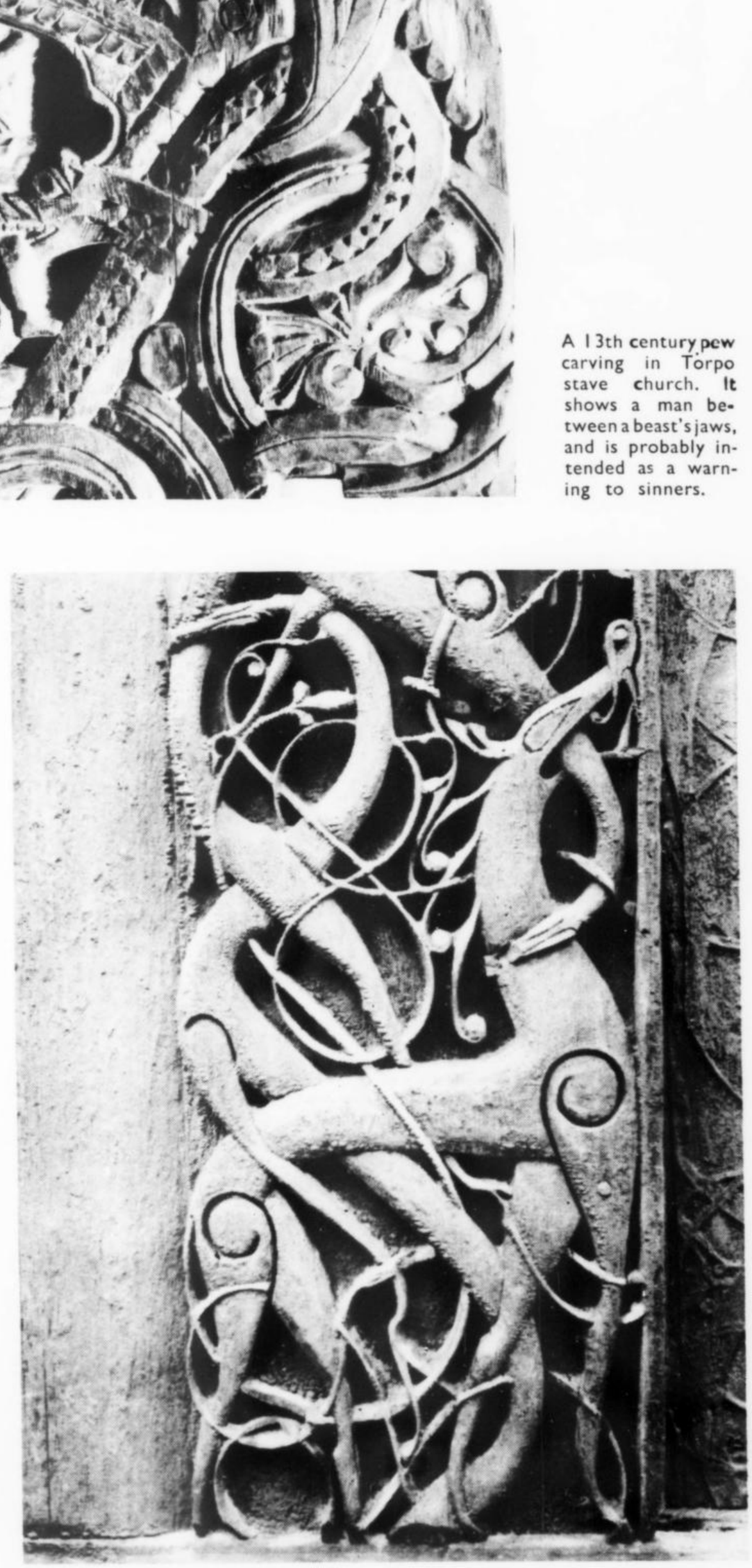
Their general form of construction may have come from abroad but it was adapted to the character of the country and conceived and executed with traditional techniques and materials to harmonize perfectly with the country's established customs and ideas. What was basically new in the churches was the introduction of figure painting and sculpture, which had not previously been practised in Norway despite the great wood-working skill of the people.

It is not surprising that the stave churches are so little-known in other countries, for they were only "discovered" by the Norwegians themselves in 1826 when Professor J. C. Dahl, a

(Continued on page 8)



A 13th century pew carving in Torpo stave church. It shows a man between a beast's jaws, and is probably intended as a warning to sinners.



Carving on the oldest church door in Norway, showing a large leonine animal fighting other beasts. Though conserved in Urnes Church, it comes from an earlier building.

The legend of Sigurd Favensbane, the dragon killer, is carved on this portal in Hylestad stave church.

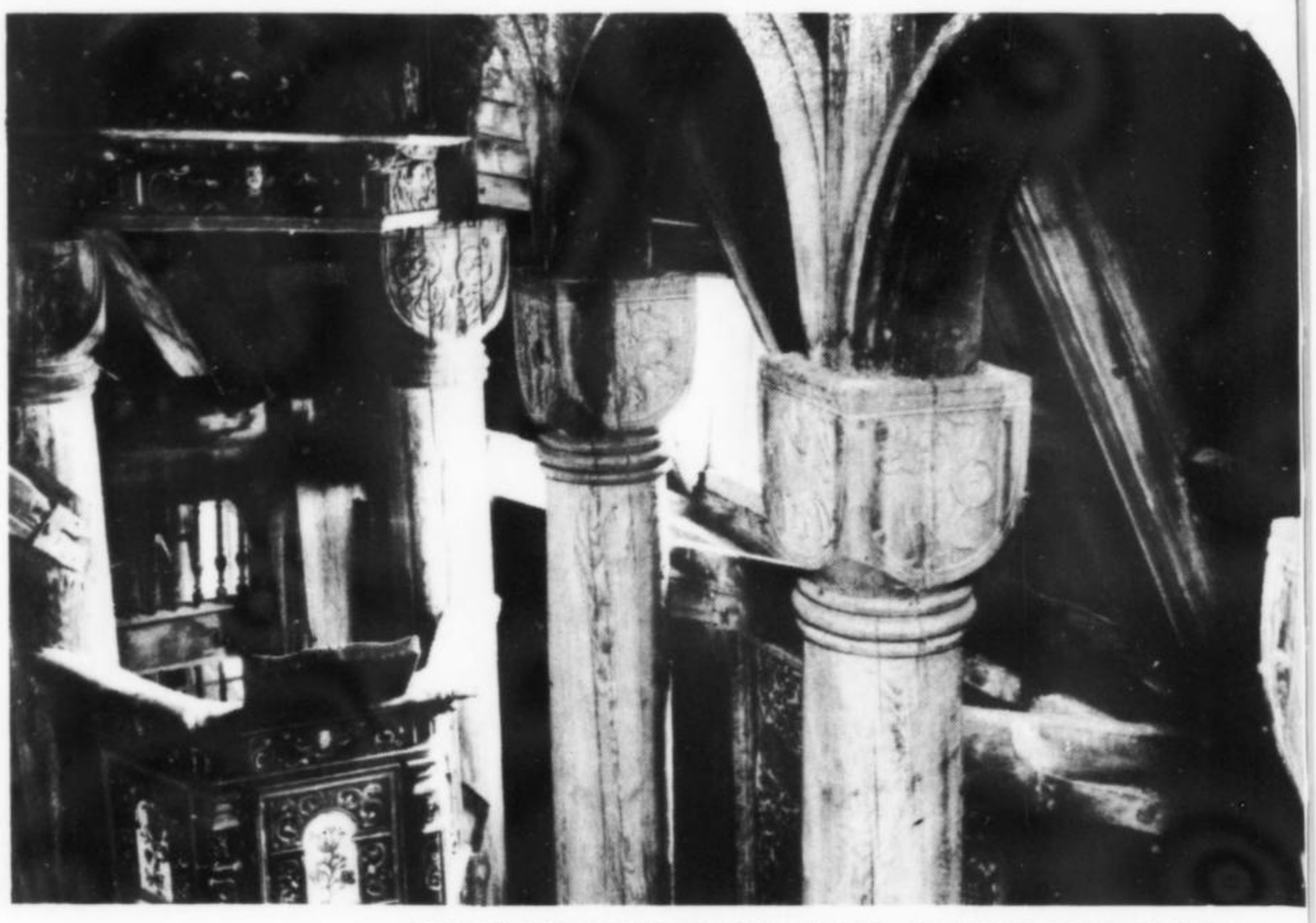
Norway (Continued)

painter and teacher at the Fine Arts Academy in Dresden, returned to his native country after a long absence and was struck by their beauty and masterly craftsmanship.

He told of his enthusiasm in a publication which he entitled in German: *Denkmale einer seher ausgebildeten Holzbaukunst aus den fruhesten Jahrhunderten in den inneren landschaften Norwegens.* This long and descriptive title expressed exactly what Dahl had discovered in his travels — monuments of a highly perfected architecture in wood, the heritage of early centuries, discovered in outlying areas of Norway.

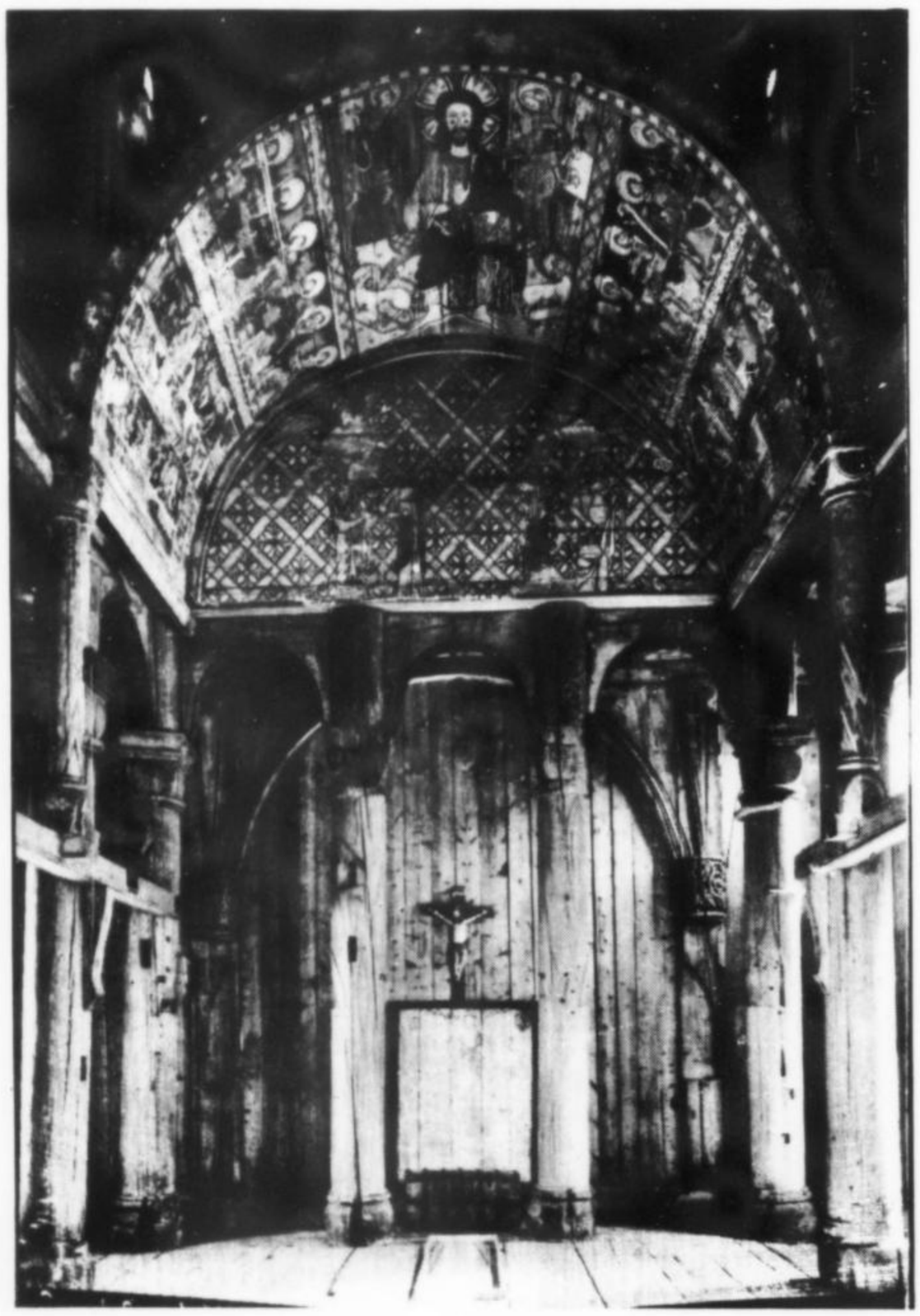
But it so happened that 1826 was the time of Romanticism, and the "scale covered monsters" (a contemporary term for the stave churches) were unappreciated. Dragon heads reared up from the gables of these churches, the same dragon heads which had witnessed the heroic past of Norway from the prows of Viking ships, and the same monsters who proudly raised their necks above the first stone churches in 1300.

Unfortunately, Dahl's discovery came somewhat late Through indifference or incomprehension, a good many of the stave churches which had weathered the years and remained in excellent condition had nevertheless been demolished. Between the 11th and 12th centuries, more than 1,000 stave churches were constructed, but today only a handful remain.



PART OF THE ARCADE IN THE NAVE OF THE URNES STAVE CHURCH.

Later stone churches appear austere alongside these wood structures with their elaborate interlaced carved motifs of slender serpents entangled in ferocious battles—as they were on the bows of the Viking ships. Another motif, the acanthus leaf, only made its appearance in the 12th century, borrowed from the holy books brought by English missionaries. Though of foreign origin, this motif was incorporated into the animalistic style, and it fitted into the rhythm and the aggressiveness inherited from the heroic days of the Norsemen, and became an element in a purely Nordic style.



THIS animalistic style is the very essence of traditional Norwegian art. Its origin goes back to the era when men engraved the image of the stag on the walls of their cave homes. The Norwegian artist found inspiration in mountains, in forests and in waterfalls. He was representative of a warlike people battling cold and darkness, but whose art was softened by the magic half-light of summer nights in the Far North. When Christianity arrived the animals of a pagan faith were not forgotten as artists carved works to the glory of a new divinity.

Writing of Borgund, the most representative of existing stave churches, Anders Bugge evokes the atmosphere which must have existed in those far-off days :

"From a window in the west gable and from small apertures placed high

THIRTEENTH CENTURY PAINTINGS IN TORPO CHURCH

above in the walls of the raised middle section, the daylight filters in fitfully, filling the space beneath the lofty arched rafters with a chiaroscuro, bright enough for us to see with surprising clarity. This half-light must have increased the effect of the glitter from the candles on the altar, which in the Middle Ages could be glimpsed through a choir opening much narrower than the present one. The flickering light glancing over the rich vestments of the clergy and the gleam of holy vessels, must have provided an enchanting and dazzling setting for the solemn service enacted in the choir within."

Authorities consider that Norwegian medieval art reached its flowering under the reign of King Haakon Haakonsson (1204-1263). But by 1349, the year of the "Black Death" this rich era came to an end. Some books speak of a "decadence" in the period that followed, but it was only a relative one, for the old native themes were taken up by secular art and gave birth to new masterpieces. Today these old themes continue to inspire new generations of Norwegian artists.

For centuries, Norway's wooden churches have braved the assaults of wind and weather. We begin to understand why, when we read an account left by Professor Lorentz Dietrichson who lived from 1834 to 1917.

He wrote: "Up in the mountains the weather was clear. The sun set the tufts of heather aglow and the morning air was vibrating with light as I entered the shadow of the old stave church to take measurements and to make notes. But during the morning the weather changed and a storm broke suddenly outside.

"The walls of the old church creaked as if they were ready to cave in. It seemed as if each plank was about to tear lose from its place, break away from its fixed frame of pillars and beams and bring down everything under the shaking columns. The entire building seemed to be oscillating—and, in fact, it was.

"But little by little the creakings seemed to become more regular and rhythmical. Despite the howling of the storm growing even stronger, the noise around me diminished—it was as if the planks had slipped back into their grooves. The entire building regained its equilibrium and its calm.

"Although the storm, instead of abating, became even more violent, I soon heard neither the slightest noise nor the least creaking from the walls of the stave church. The entire building had *settled*: from now on, it would stand hard and fast in the midst of the torment around it."

And today, though reduced in number through man's indifference, the stave churches of Norway stand as firm to meet future storms as they have since the day when master architects and craftsmen first constructed them.

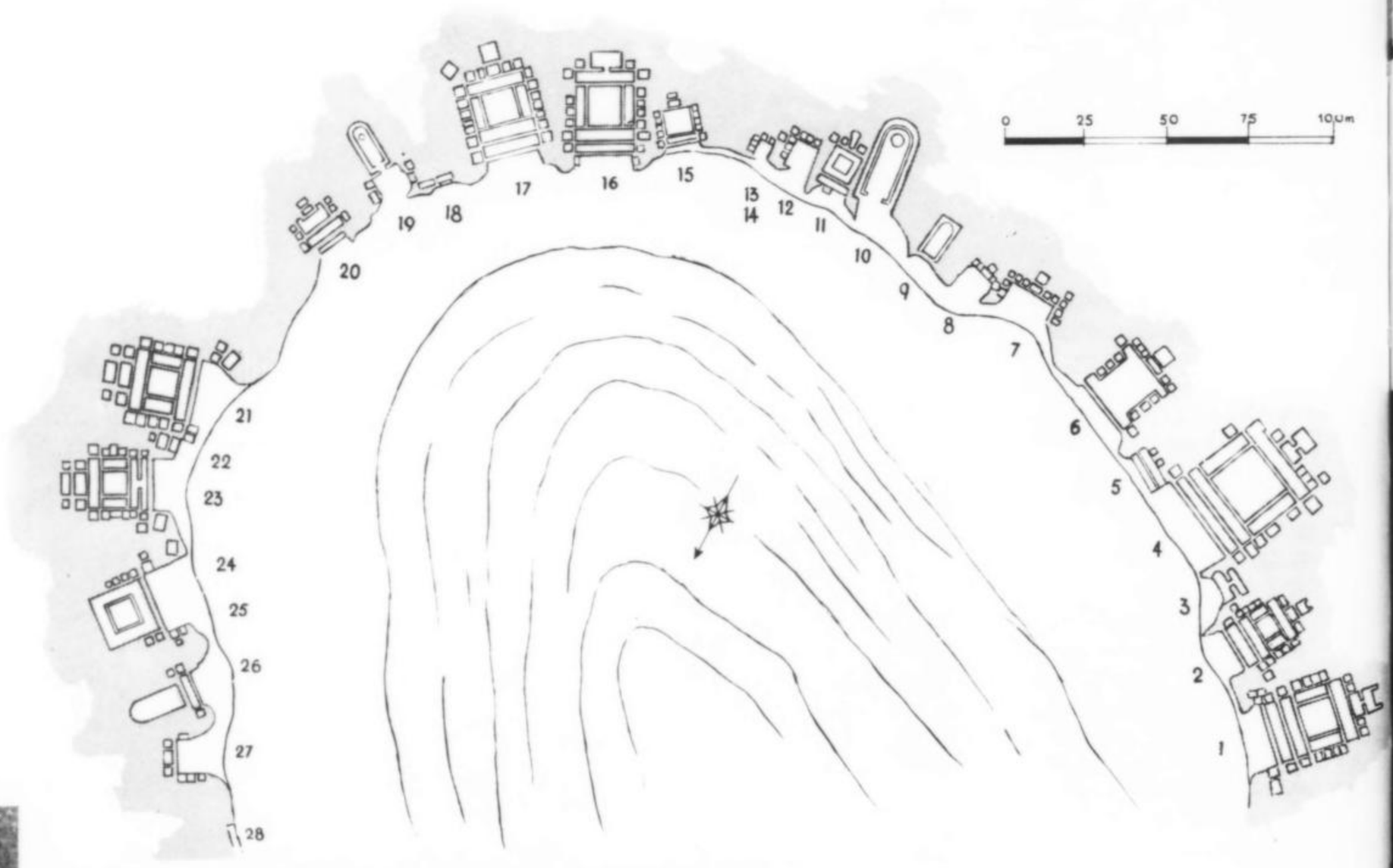
To reveal to art lovers throughout the world these masterpieces of Nordic art a volume entirely devoted to them is to be published early in 1955 in the Unesco World Art series. It will contain many reproductions in colour of the superb wall and altar paintings, as well as black and white illustrations showing the unique architectural character of these buildings.

Detail of 12th century painting (The Flight into Egypt) decorating the chancel of the stave church built at Al. (Unesco Album.)

INDIA

The lonely grandeur of Ajanta

By Francis Brunel



Ajanta's twenty-nine rock-hewn shrines and sanctuaries are shown in this general plan. They were numbered from West to East by the archaeological service responsible for their conservation. Cave XIV is situated directly above Cave XIII, and has not been represented.

One day, over 2,000 years ago a group of Buddhist teachers and their disciples, searching for a place to set up a spiritual retreat in a secluded part of western India, came across a deep, semi-circular gorge surrounded by overhanging cliffs. On the flank of the southern cliff face they discovered caves which from distant times had probably been the dwellings of hermits. All around was the jungle in its coat of verdure, bright with its flowers and contrasting with the warmly tinted rock of the mountain. Below, a torrent—the source of the river Waghora—cascaded through the rocks.

In its harsh and lonely grandeur, the site seemed an ideal one to these men searching for solitude and tranquility. They saw from the rock formations that the caves could be enlarged, and arranged as living quarters and places for meditation. So they set about transforming them.

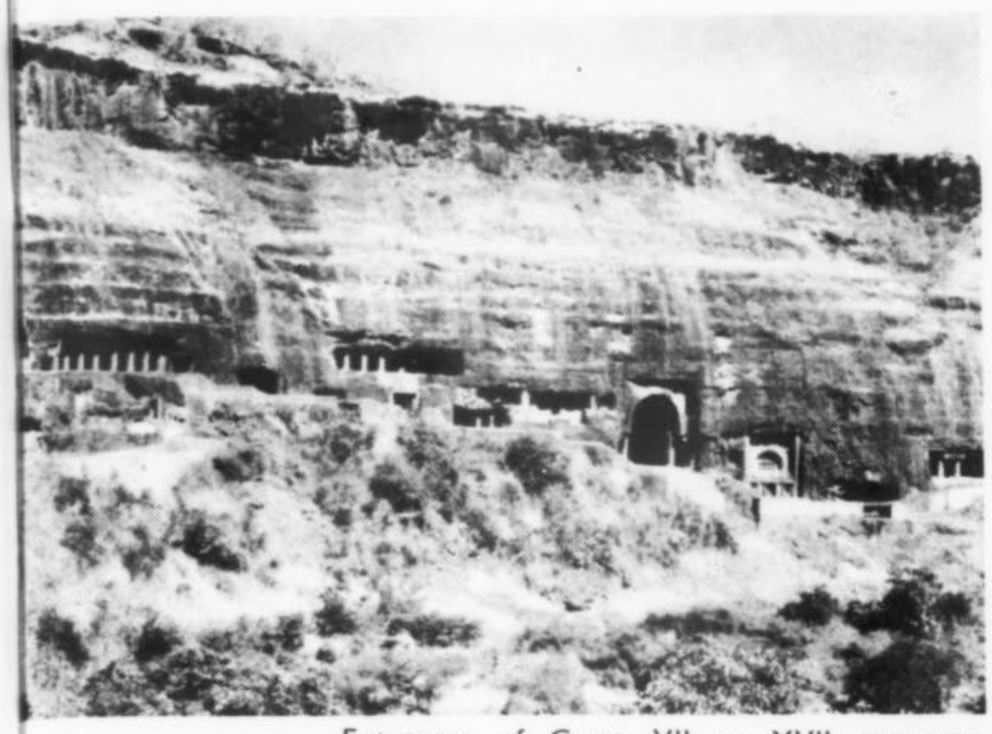
The news of the Buddhist monk's arrival and their settlement in this secluded valley, soon spread throughout the surrounding countryside. People in search of knowledge, work or mysteries came to visit them and stayed to help them in their enterprise, as a few weatherbeaten inscriptions in old Sanskrit still bear witness. In the tenth shrine is written : "The gift of a doorfront by Basathiputa"; in the sixteenth monastery, "Salutation first to the renowned Buddha, who dispels the intense fire of misery from this world, a King"; and in the twelfth monastery, "The meritorious gift of a dwelling with cells and hall by the merchant Ghanamadada.".

Little by little this spiritual retreat became a small university, where Buddha's teachings, philosophy, ethics, the traditional sciences, and techniques like art, could be studied and practised. One of the world's centres of learning had been born.

Faith and enthusiasm fed the efforts of a multitude of monks, artisans, artists and students who, through the centuries, hewed and chipped away the mountain rock. Inspired by a common purpose, they filled the peaceful valley with the sound of their hammers and chisels. The first shrines and monasteries took shape, were decorated and painted. Ajanta, as the place was called, became a pilgrimage centre as well as a home of learning.

From the 2nd century B.C. until the 7th century A.D., a whole series of monasteries and temples was hewn out of the solid rock at different levels along the cliff, and these were linked with each other by narrow paths and many steep stairways. Finally, they were large enough to shelter hundreds of monks, students, visitors or benefactors.

In the daily life of these monastery dwellers study and



Entrances of Caves VII to XVII are seen in this view of the southern cliff face. The wide façade of the chaitya (temple) in Cave X stands out from among the rest of the caves.

Bas-reliefs cover the façade of the shrine in Cave XIX Buddha is shown in a number of classical attitudes, expounding his teachings. This chaitya can be considered as one of the leading architectural wonders of the world.

Detail of a fresco in monastery (Cave I) showing a young woman with a toilet tray. (This plate and those published on the following pages are taken from the Unesco Album).

meditation alternated with physical exercises and manual and artistic occupations, inspired by the serene and peaceful Buddhist doctrine. And from their high-perched stone verandahs, the monks could look out on a scene of wild and magnificent natural beauty, enhanced by the torrent twisting through its seven cascades at their feet.

The approximate periods of the Ajanta community's development have been fixed by a comparative study of architectural styles, sculpture and paintings, which show two main periods of expansion. The first of these is identified with a group of two shrines (IX and X) and five monasteries (VII, VIII, XI, XII, and XIII), which were constructed between the 2nd century B.C. and the 2nd century A.D. The second period followed some centuries later, and it is thought to have ended towards the beginning of the 7th century.

The gap between these two periods was probably due to the division of Buddhism into two streams when the conception of Hinayana was being challenged by Mahayana, which saw in Buddha not a mere teacher but a being, eternal and divine, who came to sojourn among men. Some of the temple monasteries were never completed either because the rock resisted further work or for other, unknown reasons.

It is difficult for anyone who has not actually seen these temples hewn from the mountain to imagine their grandeur, which becomes still more amazing when we realize all the difficulties which had to be overcome by those who built them. In the largest and oldest shrine (No. X), the main hall is 95 feet long, 41 feet wide and 36 feet high. The central hall of monastery No. XVI is 65 feet in length, 65 feet in breadth and 15 feet in height. These monastery temples are among the earliest rock-cut remains in India ; and in their monumental galleries the whole of India's ancient life can be seen anew, with its scenes, settings and atmosphere preserved for us in an artistic description of extraordinary variety and quality.

The caves are of two main types—the Chaityas, shrines or meeting-places, in the form of an apse (semi-circular in shape) and the Viharas, four-sided monasteries or living caves.

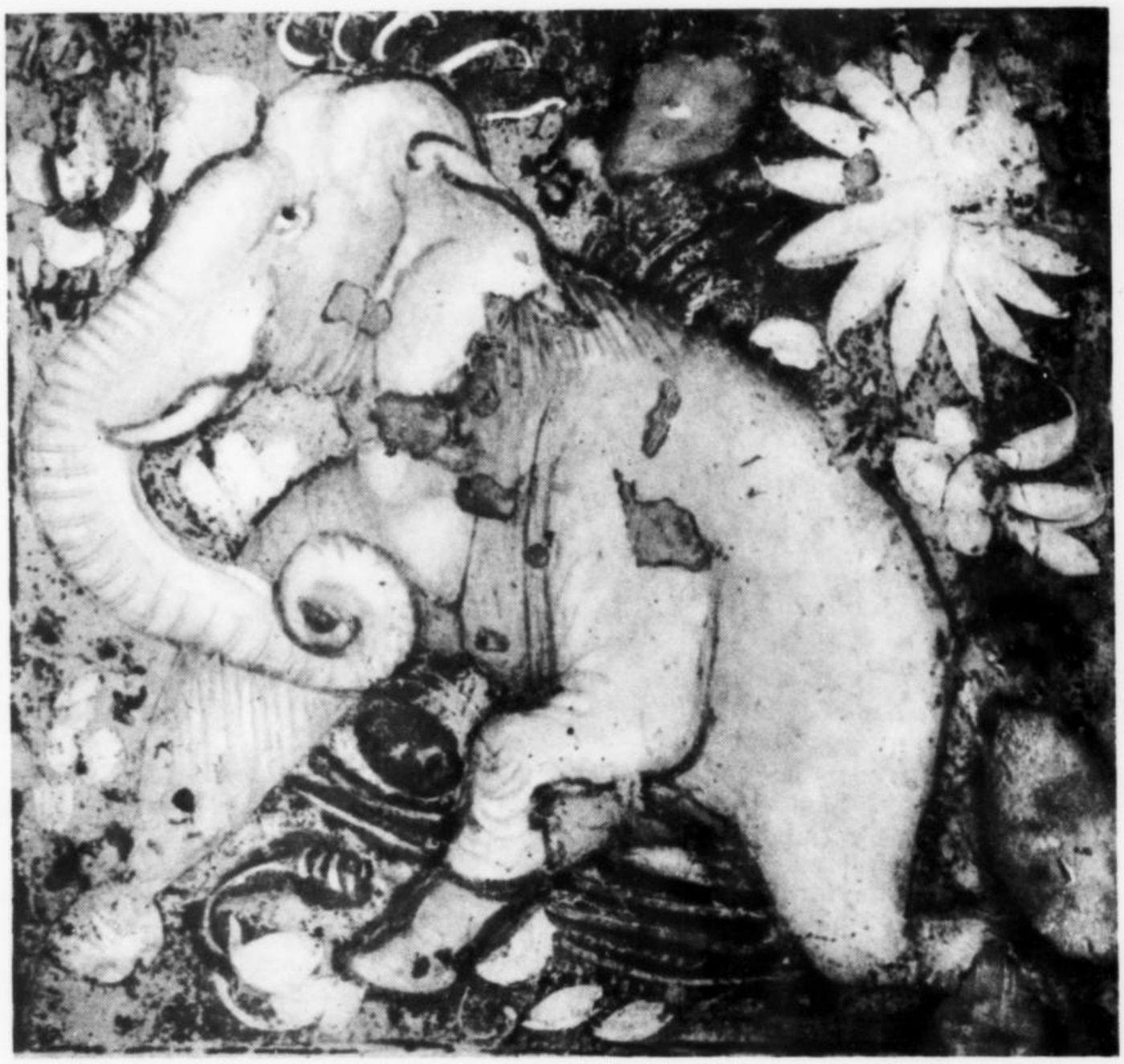
The Chaityas have a monumental portico, and the vaulting is supported on both sides by massive colonnades, flanked by secondary side-aisles. The style of these shrines seems to be inspired from wooden structures of the secular communities mentioned in early Buddhist literature. In the "choir", is a *stupa*—a kind of symbolic dome serving also as a reliquary. In later years these *stupas* were adorned with effigies of Buddha.

The Vihara are the cave monasteries, with a verandah in front of a square hall, cells provided with stone beds on three sides and one or more minor shrines. Sturdy pillars support the roof and the vaulting ; the façades are adorned with columns hewn from the rock which, by its overhang, forms a protection for them.

(Continued on page 14.)

Floating in the night air, Indra, the King of Heaven, is attended by three celestial nymphs. The purity of drawing, the elegance and harmony of composition and the grace of movement in the group distinguish this small fresco, one of the finest and most charming in Cave XVII. Right, a crowd of monks devoutly listening to a sermon.

Paintings of plants and animals are imbued with the Buddhist spirit of affection for all living things. This monastery painting in Cave I shows a pink elephant emerging from a lotus pond. Below, two antelopes are depicted



INDIA
(Continued)

Early Buddhism on a 'magic carpet'

A walk round these many-levelled temples is like a journey "by magic carpet" to the ancient world of early Buddhist times. Wonderful decorations, sculpture, bas-reliefs and paintings cover the walls, columns and roofs and reveal the full splendour of a supreme "moment" in Art — one of its "golden ages".

The sure technique and undoubted mastery of these art forms are evident as far back as the 2nd century B.C. They have a remarkable freshness and a complete absence of rigidity. Their easy-flowing lines caress, emphasize or enliven the forms and figures. Their refined style and the flexibility in the composition of the captivating crowds and groups, whether in movement or in repose, is remarkable. A whole range of nuances is displayed in the isolated figures, full of strange majesty or tenderness, grandeur or abandon, meditation or compassion, yet always vibrant with life.

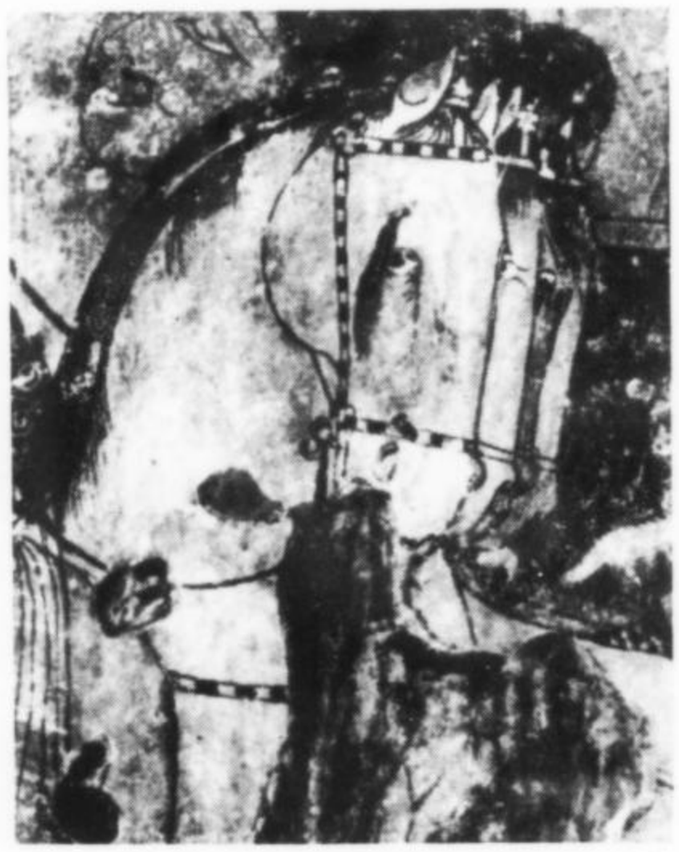
Alongside the tangible world of people and objects, the other, the one of feeling and thought, is also admirably expressed with a powerful force of suggestion. And even though the artists' main concern is with the life and message of Buddha, it is life as a whole that is portrayed.

"Human life", says the introduction to the Unesco Volume on Ajanta, "in the crowded drama of love, compassion, happiness, yearning, death, suffering and sacrifice, is illuminated by a glow of religious feeling dominated by a sense of transience of existence and profound piety."

All this, found in the frescoes, is perhaps the secret of their creators. At one juncture an atmosphere of intense fervour, of religious feeling and love is created in these soberly or sumptuously sculptured shrines; at another, the religious subjects come to life and the love scenes are filled with spirituality. At one moment, vast scenes show the pretentiousness of official events—caparisoned elephants, knights on prancing mounts, princes or princesses bedecked with jewels and surrounded by the flowing concourse of their subjects, hunting scenes, the capture of wild elephants, legends like the landing of King Bijaya in Ceylon, processions and offerings.

At other times, intimate family scenes are depicted—lovers embracing beneath pavilions supported by red and blue lacquer columns, or beside richly coloured beds of flowers ; a princess at her toilette, musicians and dancers preparing to entertain ; groups of lightly or barely clad women revealing a charming beauty of human form ; children playing by their mother's side, with their favourite birds or animals.

In these life-like frescoes of living beings the artists have given free rein to their inclinations in portraying the human body, feminine slenderness, in particular, being one of their favourite themes. The modelling, the contrast of flesh-tints, the airy lightness of celestial beings such as Indra, God of the Heavens, with his escort of nymphs—all are expressed with the same intense interest.



What is the explanation for a choice of subjects that seem "profane" and apparently so far removed from the cloistered life of the seeker after wisdom ? It is perhaps because the Master, when confronted with the many aspects of life and desire, and having renounced all, had said : "Passing beyond the forms of beauty, ye may find beauty itself."

This is one of the outstanding features of an art which is steeped in humanity, and in which design, colour, form and composition were simply artistic elements of a spiritual inspiration underlying all of it. It is a truly Indian tradition, found as long ago as we are able to go back, that the divine is not separated from the human, nor the spirit from the body. For he who has been freed, the body is a "garden of delight"; no longer the slave of the senses it remains calm and detached.

When Buddha's disciple Ananda asked him whether friendship, association, and intimacy with the beautiful were not half of the holy life, the Master replied: "Say not so, Ananda, it is the whole, not the half of the holy life." Inspired by this principle, disciples and teachers, artisans, sculptors and painters, have tried to convey a better understanding of Buddha's message of love and compassion for every living thing, and of universal peace. They have left the world this moving testimony of their research and their discovery.

After being forsaken and neglected for centuries, and despite the damage or destruction of so many of its paintings by weather, swarms of wild bees, insects, birds, bats and even by human hands, Ajanta still remains an outstanding treasure trove of Indian art from the 3rd century B.C. to the 7th century A.D.—a joyous and serene art. Every evening, the last rays of the setting sun penetrate for a few moments into these places of meditation. As they light up the faces in the frescoes and sculptures, one by one, they invest these achievements of bygone times with new life. In the shrine of the Vihara XI the shafts of sunlight bring a sudden divine ecstasy to the face of Buddha as he sits upon his throne with, at his feet, a kneeling man, and on each side, two lions lying peaceably with two deer. In the presence of the splendours at Ajanta, the words of Buddha take on their full meaning: "Discovering the life that is in himself, everywhere and in everything, the wise man embraces the whole world in one feeling of peace, compassion and limitless love."

"Be ye kind to all that liveth."

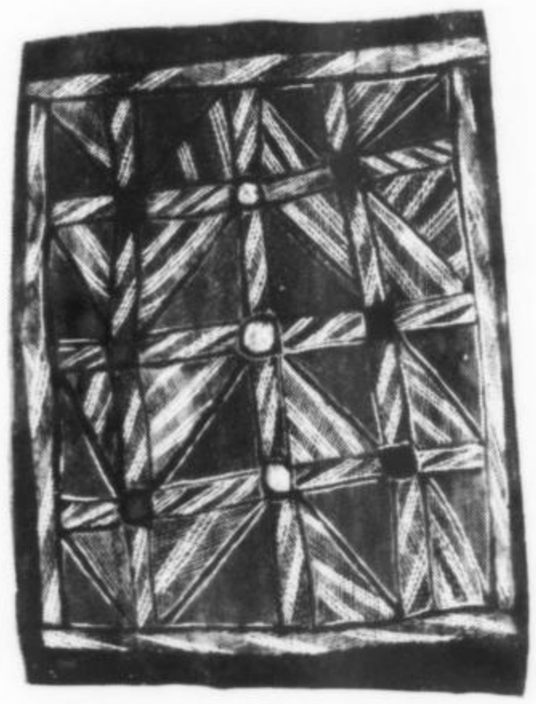
"Be ye the heirs of truth."

★

Francis Brunel has studed the cultures of the East for many years and has travelled extensively in Asian countries. From 1944 to 1947 he was head of the French cultural mission to India. He has been a member of the Unesco Department of Education since 1949.

AUSTRALIA

SPIRIT MEN called Eradbatti and Kumail-Kumait are depicted in bark paintings by artists of Oenpelli, Western Arnhem Land (Unesco Album).



An art on bark and stone

THE aborigines of Australia still practise an art comparable with that of our stone age ancestors of Europe. This art permeates all aspects of the aborigines' life. It is the vital medium through which they keep alive their philosophies, laws and the stories of their creation.

Throughout southern and central Australia, this art is remarkably simple and abstract, consisting almost entirely of spirals, concentric circles, wavy and straight lines. In other parts of the continent, however, the art tends to become representational. In the Hawkesbury River basin of New South Wales, the natives engraved, on the flat rocks, outlines of huge men, animals, birds and fish, some of them reaching a length of sixty feet. Because the meanings and the underlying myths of these engravings were not collected whilst the aborigines who produced them were still living, that knowledge is lost forever.

In North-eastern Australia, on the opposite side of the continent, the art of the caves is dominated by large anthropomorphic figures with halolike ornaments known as the Wandjina. These paintings are associated with the ceremonies of rainmaking, spirit children and the increase of food.

In Arnhem Land, Northern Australia, aboriginal art has developed in some of its most interesting forms. The volume published in the "Unesco World Art Series" deals with the rich and varied art forms of the cave and bark paintings found within the boundaries of that remote land.

(Continued on next page)

A neat and animated short-hand script

ADUNGEN, an evil spirit, with an aborigine in hot pursuit. Spear thrown by aborigine has missed its mark. Painting (above) was found on cave wall at Unbalanya Hill, Western Arnhem Land. Another rock painting from same region, four running women (right) is remarkable for its grace. All this art is a neat and animated short-hand script depicting action. (Unesco Album plates).

DANCE OF JAMBUWAL, which tells the story of the man who creates storms, is performed by aborigines from Yirrkalla (Arnhem Land). The dance takes place during the circumcision ceremony of the tribe's young boys (Australian Official Photo).

(Continued from previous page)

The most decorative and colourful cave paintings have been found along the western edge of the Arnhem Land plateau. Recent investigations have shown that they are of two different types: the static, polychrome, X-ray paintings—some of them produced within the memory of living men—of animals, birds, fish and reptiles, but seldom of human beings, in which the internal as well as the external details are portrayed; and an older, more vital, monochromatic art, consisting almost entirely of single-line drawings of human beings in action—men running, fight-

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***AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CULTURE,** a travelling exhibition prepared by the Australian Government and offered for circulation through Unesco, has given the people of many North American cities an insight into a strange and fascinating world, since it began a two-year tour of the United States and Canada in June, 1953. It tells the story of the aborigines attractively and instructively. After its North American tour it will be widely shown in Europe.*

ing or throwing spears and women carrying their food vessels. These single-line monochromatic drawings have a sense of movement entirely lacking in the polychrome paintings.

The aborigines believe that these drawings—most of them less than half a metre high—are the work, not of their own kind, but of a tall thinbodied fairy people known as the Mimis, who live in the rocky plateau.

No one has seen a Mimi, though they collect food and hunt in the same way as the aborigines, for the Mimis are a shy people, particularly keen of hearing, who, at the faintest sound of an intruder, run to a cleft in the rocks of the plateau and blow upon it. The cleft opens, admits the Mimis to their underground home, then closes behind them to keep out all intruders. The belief in the Mimi artists is, it would seem, a rationalisation on the part of the aborigines to explain an ancient art form which they themselves do not practise.

Although most of the cave paintings belong to an age not yet defined, few of the bark paintings of Arnhem Land could be more than a year old when collected. The bark sheets, the walls of the wet-weather shelters, on which the men paint their designs during the enforced idleness of the monsoon season are generally destroyed by bush-fires, the elements and insects in less than a year.

The bark paintings illustrated in the Unesco volume are from five localities in Arnhem Land, Oenpelli in the west, Goulburn Island and Milingimbi on the north coast, Yirrkalla at the north-eastern corner and Groote Eyelandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Arnhem Land aborigines are divided into different clans, each clan having its own particular totem, with its attendant songs, ceremonies and designs. These clans, and their territories, were determined by the mythical creators who lived during the early days of the world, and the myths which describe the exploits and adventures of those creators and which are, in essence, the philosophy of the aborigines, explain how they made the firmament, the world beneath, and the creatures upon it.

Two of these creators, the Djunkgao Sisters, occupy an important place in the beliefs of the aborigines of Northern Arnhem Land. Coming from some place near the sunrise, the mythical women landed on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria and, travelling westward, named all the clan territories, the animals and the plants in their path. Certain bark paintings, high totems of the Narga ceremonies of the Djunkgao Sisters, illustrate incidents of that journey.

On a plain south of Milingimbi, the sisters wishing to create wells of fresh water, pushed their digging sticks into the ground at a number of places. As the water gushed out, they named each well, decreed the design and chanted the song that would, forever afterwards, be associated with them.

(Continued on next page)

KANGAROO HUNTERS—men and women—and their quarry are depicted in painting, above, from Unbalanya Hill. Below, mangrove crab and a spiny ant-eater (Unesco-Album plates).

AUSTRALIA

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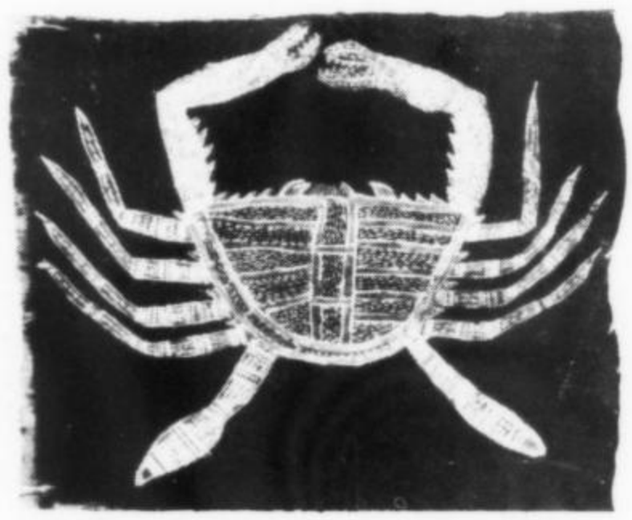
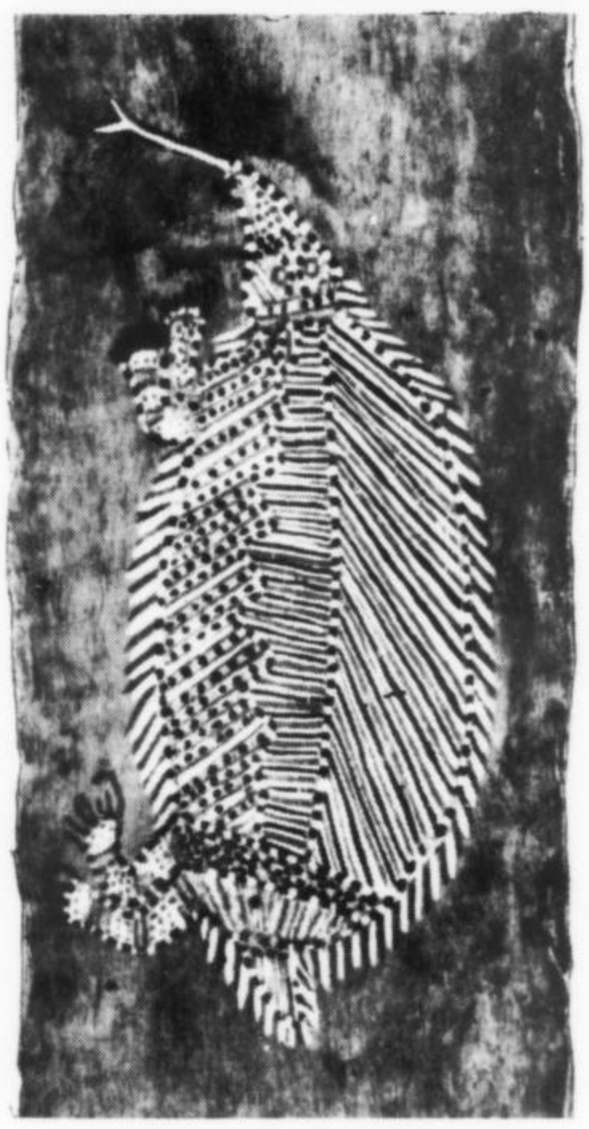




The discs on the bark painting indicate those wells, the intersecting lines, the path made by the Djunkgao Sisters as they walked from one place to another, and the cross-hatched areas, the open plain.

The basic art of Arnhem Land, of which the bark paintings of Groote Eylandt are typical, consists of single or grouped figures on a plain ground. This arrangement is used over most of the area, extending southward until it reaches the simple abstract designs of Central Australia, and northward, until it is absorbed by the more complex symbolism of the north coast. Toward the west, however, the paintings, though still retaining their basic characteristics, are modified by the curious X-ray art.

Within a limited area on the north and north-eastern coast of Arnhem Land, the range of designs becomes wider and the figures more complex, and the ground, instead of being plain, is filled in with cross-hatchings of various colours.

The material and tools used by the artists of Arnhem Land could hardly be simpler. The painting surfaces are either the inside of a sheet of bark stripped from a eucalyptus tree, or the walls and ceilings of caves. The colours are black, red, yellow and white pigments ground to a thin paste on a flat stone. The fixative is the sap of a bruised orchid bulb, rubbed directly on the painting surface. The brushes, too, are no more than strips of chewed bark for the broader lines, thin sticks for making dots and a single feather or strands of palm leaf for cross-hatching and finer details.

When watching the artists at work one is impressed with their sureness; each man appears to have a complete mental image of his picture before he begins; he seldom alters his design or even corrects a brush stroke.

Many of the bark and cave paintings have no ceremonial or religious function, but are produced for pure pleasure of creative effort, a pleasure which stimulates the true artist in all cultures.

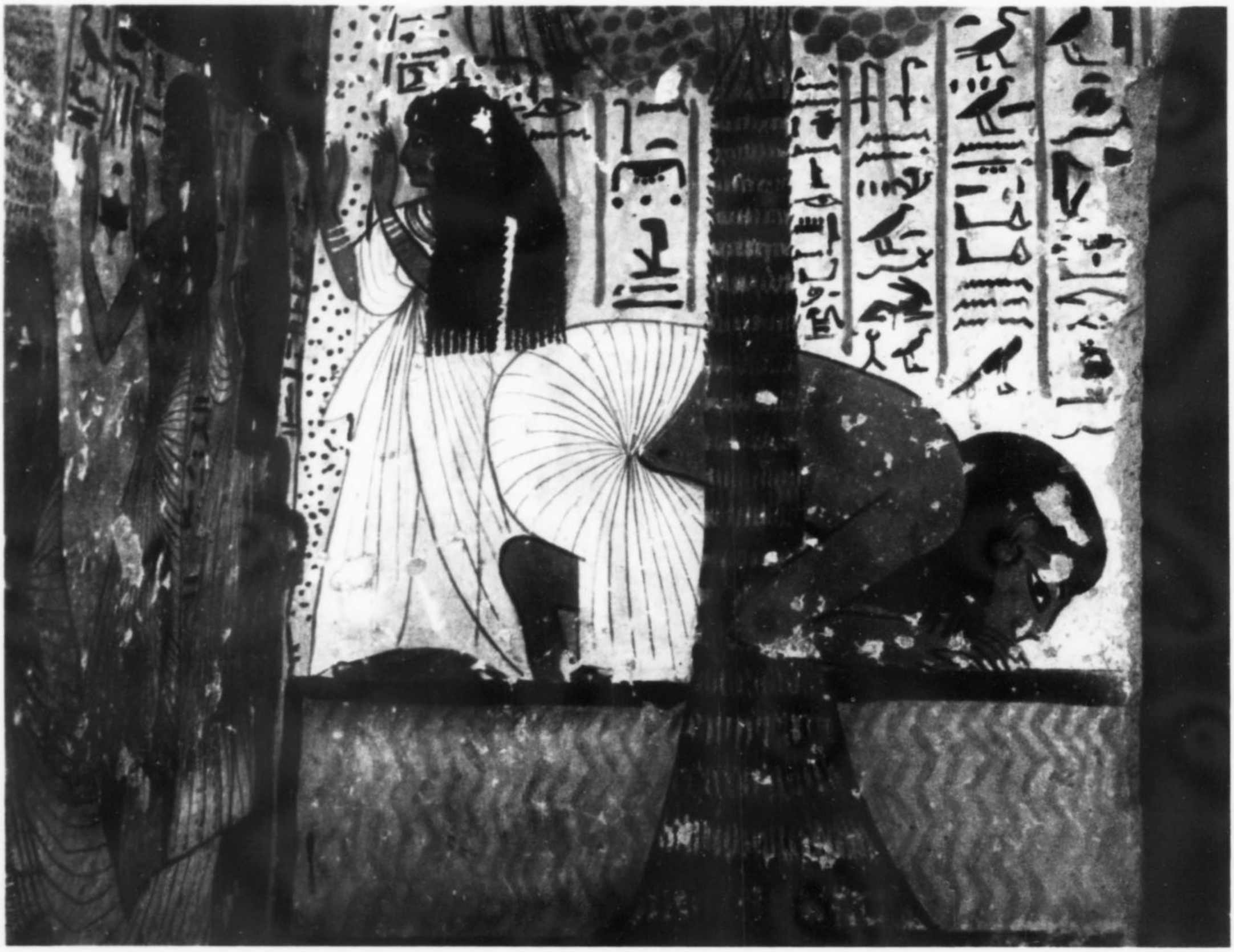
There are paintings, both on bark and in caves, which have more important functions. In the initiation rituals, secret designs, painted on sheets of bark, instruct the novitiates in the esoteric myths of the tribe.

Although the culture of the aboriginal artist is vastly different from that of our own, the subject of his painting beyond the realms of our knowledge, his symbolism unlike anything we possess and his materials and colours extremely limited, he uses the same principles of line, colour, balance, and spacing of design elements present in all great art.

AUSTRALIA - Rock painting - a group of Nalbidji men and women, Unbalanya Hill, Western Arnhem Land.

EGYPT - Tomb of Menna, Valley of the Kings. Papyrus thicket from a bird hunting scene. XVIIIth Dynasty.

EGYPT - Tomb of Amenakht, Valley of the Kings. The dead man, kneeling beside a palmtree, is bending forward to drink water from the river; beside him stands his wife, making a gesture of worship. Ramessid period.



INDIA - A King and a Queen in a tent. Ajanta Cave.

YUGOSLAVIA - Detail from fresco in Church of St. Sophia, Ochrida.

NORWAY - Three Apostles, detail from a canopy in Stave Church, Torpo.

Scenes of a happy after-life

by Jacques Vandier

Head Curator, Department of Egyptian Antiquities, Louvre Museum, Paris.

THE Egyptians were not only architects, sculptors and craftsmen of genius; they were also painters who were aware from the beginning of the extent to which a drawing or a carving in relief could be improved by colour. The artists of the Nile Valley made use of colour in every field of art—even in goldsmith's work, where pigments were replaced by semi-precious stones or fragments of coloured glass. Statues and architectural motifs, too, were painted. In speaking of painting, however, it is natural to confine oneself to the bright-coloured scenes which decorate the walls of Egyptian temples and tombs. Even this comparatively narrow field offers countless examples.

The majority of scenes depicted in the tombs, and an even greater proportion of those shown in the temples, were carved either in relief or in hollow relief before being coloured; but wall painting was also used at all periods in the decoration of tombs. Under the New Empire (1), in the famous necropolis, at Thebes, capital of the Empire, this process predominated. It is from this necropolis that most of the illustrations in the Unesco Album—Egypt: Paintings from Tombs and Temples—are drawn. It was not, however, a considered preference, but resulted from technical necessity, since the rock was of poor quality and unsuitable for carving; so

(1) *Circa 1580 to 1090 B.C. — Other periods referred to in this article; Old Kingdom (c. 3200-2300 B.C.); Vth Dynasty (c. 2750-2625 B.C.); XVIIIth (c. 1580-1350 B.C.); XIXth (1350-1205 B.C.).*

TEMPLE AT KARNAK.
(Photo copyright Aibert Raccah, Cairo.)

(Continued from page 23)

faulty was it that it had to be primed before it would hold the colour.

The background colour of these paintings varies. Under the XVIIIth Dynasty, the most flourishing period, it was usually white or blue-grey; the same colours are found at a later epoch, but light or dark beige and yellow become increasingly frequent. Apart from black and white, the Egyptians used only four colours—yellow, red, blue and green—which could, of course, be mixed if desired. The scenes, which were drawn and corrected before being painted, were aligned in horizontal bands across the walls, and covered them completely, save for a decorative frieze at the top and a series of strips in different colours forming a kind of skirting-board below.

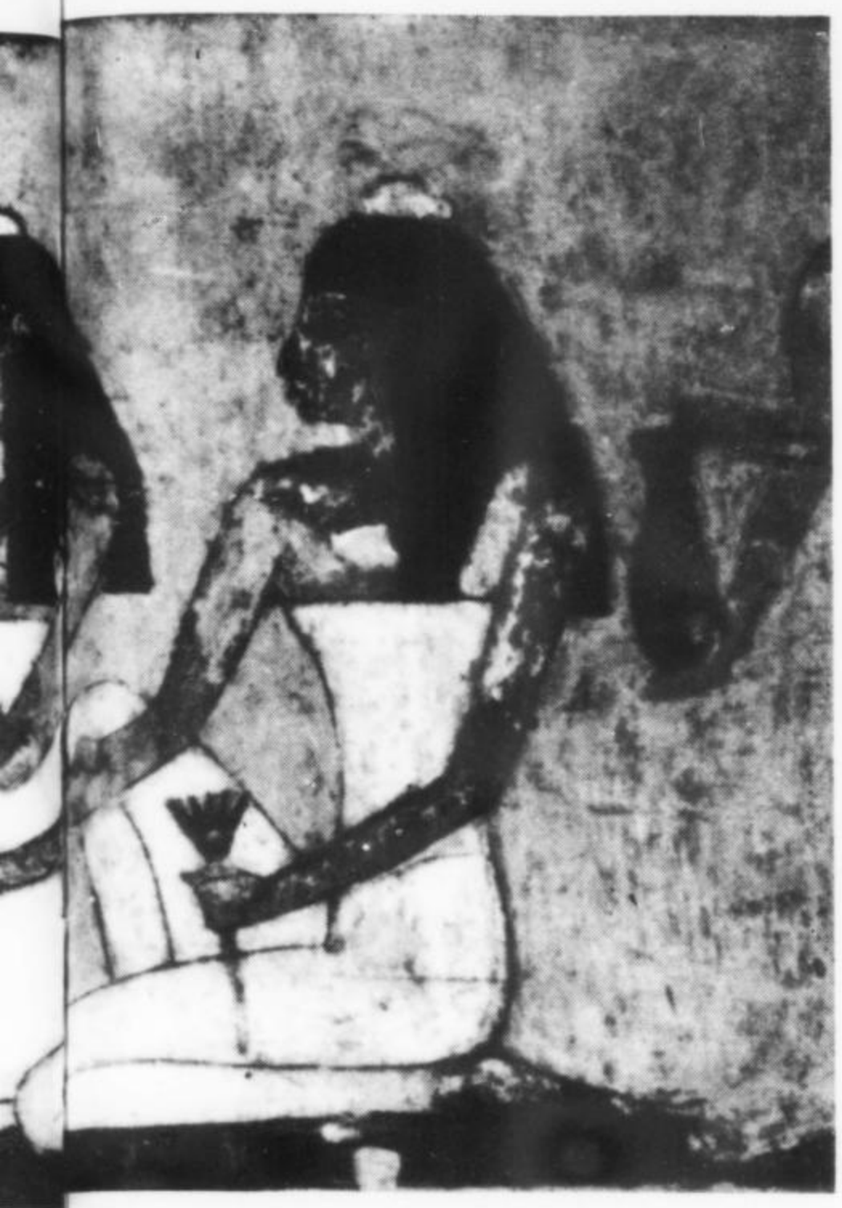
Egyptian drawings are governed by a number of conventions which often disturb the uninitiated, though specialists, through familiarity, hardly notice them. To begin with, although the Egyptians knew perfectly well how to show a subject full face if they wished, they could seldom bring themselves to do so in wall paintings, where they no doubt wished to abide by a particular concept of graphic art. They seem to have felt that the profile was more typical of the individual than the full face. The details of the profile are depicted realistically, except for the eyes, which are shown more or less as though seen from the front. Complications did not arise except where the whole body was shown.

The aim of the artists was to reproduce the different parts of the body as fully as possible. To have drawn the shoulders in profile would have meant concealing, or almost concealing, one arm; so it may be concluded—despite a very few exceptions—that the Egyptians thought it essential to give a front view of the shoulders, at any rate in the case of a motionless figure.

When the subject is seen in action, the position of the shoulders varies, within certain limits, according to the nature of the movement. We are given a side view of the bust and a three-quarter view of the abdomen, the navel being always visible. The legs and feet are invariably shown in profile; male figures, when in repose, have the left foot forward, whereas the females are shown with the legs pressed together—though in this latter case the artist always contrives to show the line of the leg which should be hidden, slightly in front of the visible leg. These rules cease to apply, of course, when the body is in motion.

On first thought, it might seem difficult to achieve a successful composition in this way; but without departing from these conventions the Egyptians succeeded, owing to their restraint and their feeling for sty-

Pleasures of life are shown in this painting from the Necropolis of Memphis at Saqqarah. Dancing girls are performing for the guests at a feast.



Painting in the tomb of the Vizier Rekhmiré at Thebes shows maid-servants attending to ladies at a banquet. (Paintings reproduced from the Unesco Album.)

In the tomb of Pashed, the dead man is depicted kneeling beside Osiris (King of the Dead). On left is a stylized representation of desert on which stands a falcon.

The god Khonsu offers a king of the XIXth Dynasty the emblem of life. Painting from the temple of Seti I.

Death—a mirror of life on earth

Frieze detail in the temple of Deir-el-Bahari, built at Thebes by the great queen Hatshepsut.

lization, in presenting figures which are elegant, well-proportioned, and almost natural in appearance.

At the beginning of the Old Kingdom, the scenes themselves were very simple. With a few exceptions, the best known of which are in the Meidum necropolis, in northern Egypt, the only portion to be decorated was the stele used to simulate the door separating the world of the living from that of the dead. Later, it became customary to depict figures bearing offerings on the wall surrounding this supposed door; and finally, from the Vth Dynasty onwards, in the Mastaba tombs of important officials, the chapel walls were entirely covered with illustrations.

This type of decoration originated in a belief, which persisted until the end of the XVIIIth Dynasty, that the after-life was modelled on life in this world, that the dead had the same desires and needs as the living. It is not a matter for surprise, therefore, to find, on the walls of the tombs, side by side with illustrations of the various funeral rites, secular scenes which have provided us with a great deal of valuable information about the daily life of the ancient Egyptians.

Isis kneels to ask protection of Gheb, the earth-god, for King Amenophis II. (C.A. 1448-1420 B.C. Painting from the king's tomb.

Food naturally takes a very important place, and the artists never tire of showing the dead man—alone or with his wife—seated at a table spread with various dishes and receiving servants who bring him offerings and even, in some cases, live animals. Poultry also seems to have been highly appreciated and it is not unusual to find butchers cutting up a bullock. Amusements are also included, and the meal is often enlivened by music and dancing. Moreover, a prince is represented as still addicted, in the other world, to the pleasures of hunting and fishing, and as faithful to all the obligations of his earthly life.

Under the Old Kingdom, however, no allusion is ever made to the official career of a dead man, but only to the existence he led in his immense estates in the Nile Delta—probably because on his own land he could really regard himself as absolute master.

It was for him, and for him alone, that the peasants laboured, that the shepherds tended their flocks, and the barges threaded their way through the marshy channels. Craftsmen, too, are often shown at work.

In the tomb of King Seti I, Isis, consort of Osiris, King of the Dead, stretches out her winged arms in a protective gesture.

All these scenes continued beyond the Old Kingdom, and are still found in the time of the XVIIIth Dynasty. At this period, however, a great change took place, and the official aspect of the dead man's existence is regularly illustrated, side by side with more pleasurable scenes taken over from previous epochs. The master is still fond of gliding along in a boat, past thickets of papyrus, and hurling his boomerang at unsuspecting birds. When he tires of hunting he takes his harpoon and turns to spearing the fish in the Nile.

By this time life had become less harsh. To the offerings customary in earlier periods have been added fruits and flowers, arranged with a strong decorative sense, jewels, and cups of wine; meals have developed into banquets—the master and his wife receive their guests; charming servant-girls, almost naked, pour wine, dress the hair of ladies seated sometimes on the ground and sometimes on elegantly-shaped chairs, or deck them with jewels.

Another great change took place under the XIXth Dynasty—due, no doubt, to the religious revolution of Amarna. Life itself had certainly not altered but, as a reaction against the exaggerated realism of the Amarnian period, secular scenes were no longer depicted in the tombs. The decoration was thus confined almost entirely to religious and funerary themes, drawn chiefly from large mythological compositions illustrating the ritual of the dead. As a result, it more closely resembled that of the royal tombs, for scenes of pleasure had never been admitted to the mysterious Valley of Kings, even during the period when the joy of life provided the dominant note in the burial-chambers of private individuals.

The royal tombs, like the temples, showed a god conferring life, stability and strength upon the king, or the goddess Isis spreading her wings protectively over the dead sovereign, or, kneeling on the emblem of gold, asking protection for him from Gheb, the Earth-god. Others represented the reigning king, in priestly vestments, performing the rite of "opening the mouth" of his predecessor (in this case the celebrated Pharaoh Tutankhamen).

The private tombs present increasingly detailed versions of the funeral scenes already illustrated under the XVIIIth Dynasty, but now deliberately stripped of any secular features; the dead man's meal, for instance, is once again a strictly funeral rite. Many tombs show the eldest son officiating before his parents, the dead man woshipping Osiris, or the phoenix, symbol of the Sun-god of Heliopolis, or some other god whose protection might be given him.

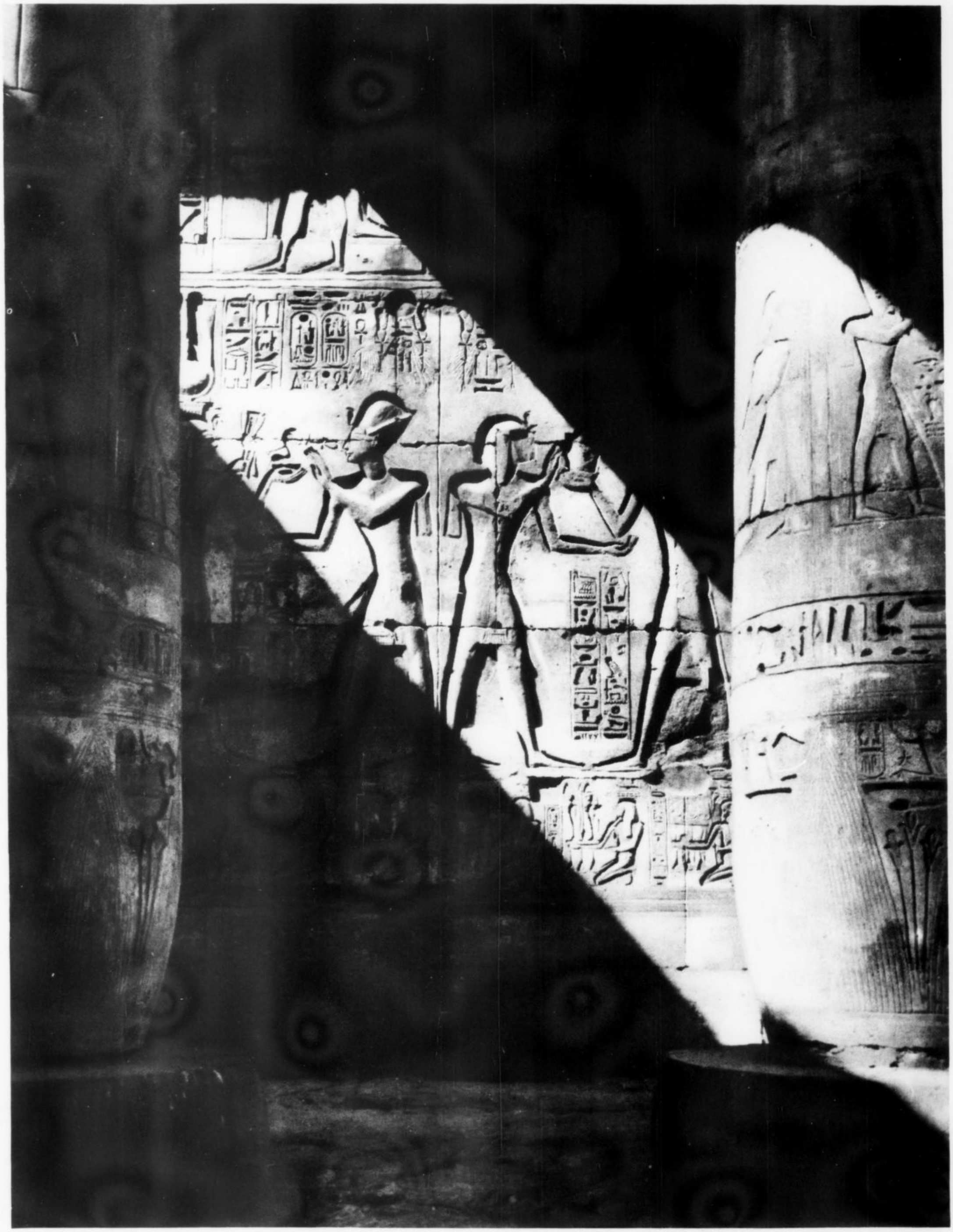
In one of the most graceful of these solemn scenes the dead man is shown kneeling beside a palm-tree (see centre page in colour), drinking the water of the river—a mysterious gesture the significance of which is not quite clear to us.

All the scenes found in the tombs, varied as they are, reveal one and the same concern—that of a happy after-life. From the earliest epoch until the end of the XVIIIth Dynasty, the attempt was made to beguile fate by depicting that life as a pleasurable affair and thus, by means of imitative magic, to achieve eternal felicity.

From the XIXth Dynasty onwards, the same purpose was pursued solely by means of the performance of religious rites and strict obedience to the divine decrees. These two concepts are not incompatible, for both emphasize the great dread of death which was felt by the Egyptians, thus bearing out the opinion of Herodotus, who declared that of all nations the Egyptians were the most religious.

★

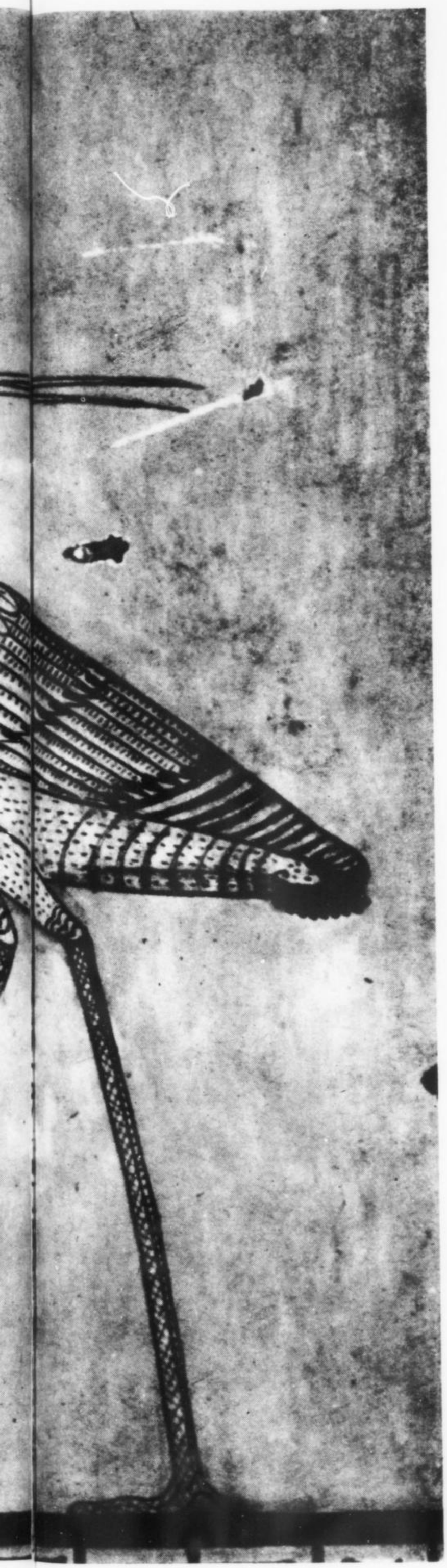
This article is taken from the introduction to "Egypt: Paintings from Tombs and Temples", in the Unesco World Art Series.



Temple at Abydos in Upper Egypt, which was one of the earliest of religious sites in the country's history.

EGYPT
(Continued)

Tomb of Anhur-khawi. The dead man is standing before the phœnix of Heliopolis (Unesco Album).



Bas-relief at Medinet Habu where Ramses III built a splendid temple to the god Amon. Below, hands severed from the slain were considered as trophies of war by the Egyptians. Those shown here were carved on the temple built at Abydos by Ramses II. (Photo copyright Raccah). Photographs of Egypt by Albert Raccah published in this issue were taken from a Paris exhibition which was organized recently by Unesco, under the auspices of the Egyptian Embassy.

Head of Ramses II, King of Egypt for 67 years (1292-1225 B.C.). This carving, over six feet high, is from a sanctuary of refined beauty built at Thebes by Ramses II for his own mortuary service, and known as the Rammesseum

Detail of a bas-relief at the Temples of Karnak (Photo copyright Raccah).

Banquet scene painted on the tomb of Nakht, a nobleman. On the left a servant girl adjusts an ear-ring for one of the guests (Unesco Album).

YUGOSLAVIA...

Head of Saint John the Baptist. Detail of 14th century painting in Gracanica Church.

Frescoes buried under plaster for 500 years

In the monastery churches of Yugoslavia, artists and historians are today engaged in one of the great "treasure hunts" of art history. The prizes they seek are medieval wall paintings which were lost to the world for 500 years, buried beneath coats of whitewash and plaster applied by the Ottoman Turks who overran the Balkans in the 14th and 15th centuries.

After this time few travellers from Western Europe journeyed along the Balkan roads, once main trading routes and communication highways between East and West. Those who did, often stopped to look at the mysteriously beautiful churches and monasteries standing in isolated settings like monuments to a happier past. Though they could only see a very minute part of the vast treasure of frescoes that really existed, they came away entranced by the beautiful things they witnessed.

But it was not until the 19th century, with the removal of a part of Turkish dominance, that a small echo of this great hidden wealth began to reach the outside world, and that it became possible to undertake a serious study of Yugoslavia's rich medieval art which flourished from the 11th to the 14th centuries.

In 1872, an exhibition of Serbian Byzantine art objects was held in Moscow. Two years later another was held in Kiev. Soon foreign archaeologists, architects and art historians began to visit the churches and monasteries of Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzgovina and Montenegro, and they were amazed.

In 1881, a British art historian named A. Evans caused a sensation in art circles by publishing a series of articles on Serbian medieval art. He claimed that without a knowledge of the hidden masterpieces in the Balkans one could not really understand the Renaissance art of Italy, and he compared the Angel of the Resurrection, a delicate fresco produced by a Serbian artist in the 13th century Milesevo Abbey, with the best works by Michelangelo.

By the beginning of the present century, Yugoslav specialists had mapped out their first full-scale plans to investigate all of Yugoslavia's medieval art, and taken the first steps in the overwhelming job of uncovering and restoring their art treasures.

Thus began the great "treasure hunt" which Yugoslav authorities have resumed since the end of the last World War with a vigour unequalled in the past. As these unknown treasures have gradually been recovered they have opened new landmarks in the history of European painting and thrown considerable light on the development of Byzantine art which originated in the eastern part of the Roman Empire when, in 330 A. D., its first Christian emperor, Constantine, removed the capital from Rome to the old Greek city-state of Byzantium, renaming it Constantinople (Now Istanbul). Byzantine Art developed from Egypt to the Balkans and Russia, and from Mesopotamia to Italy.

Byzantine art was religious in character and served chiefly to depict the principle figures in the Bible. It provided visual explanations during church services, prompting one authority to say that it was probably one of the world's first "picture stories" of the New and Old Testament. Although

Yugoslavia

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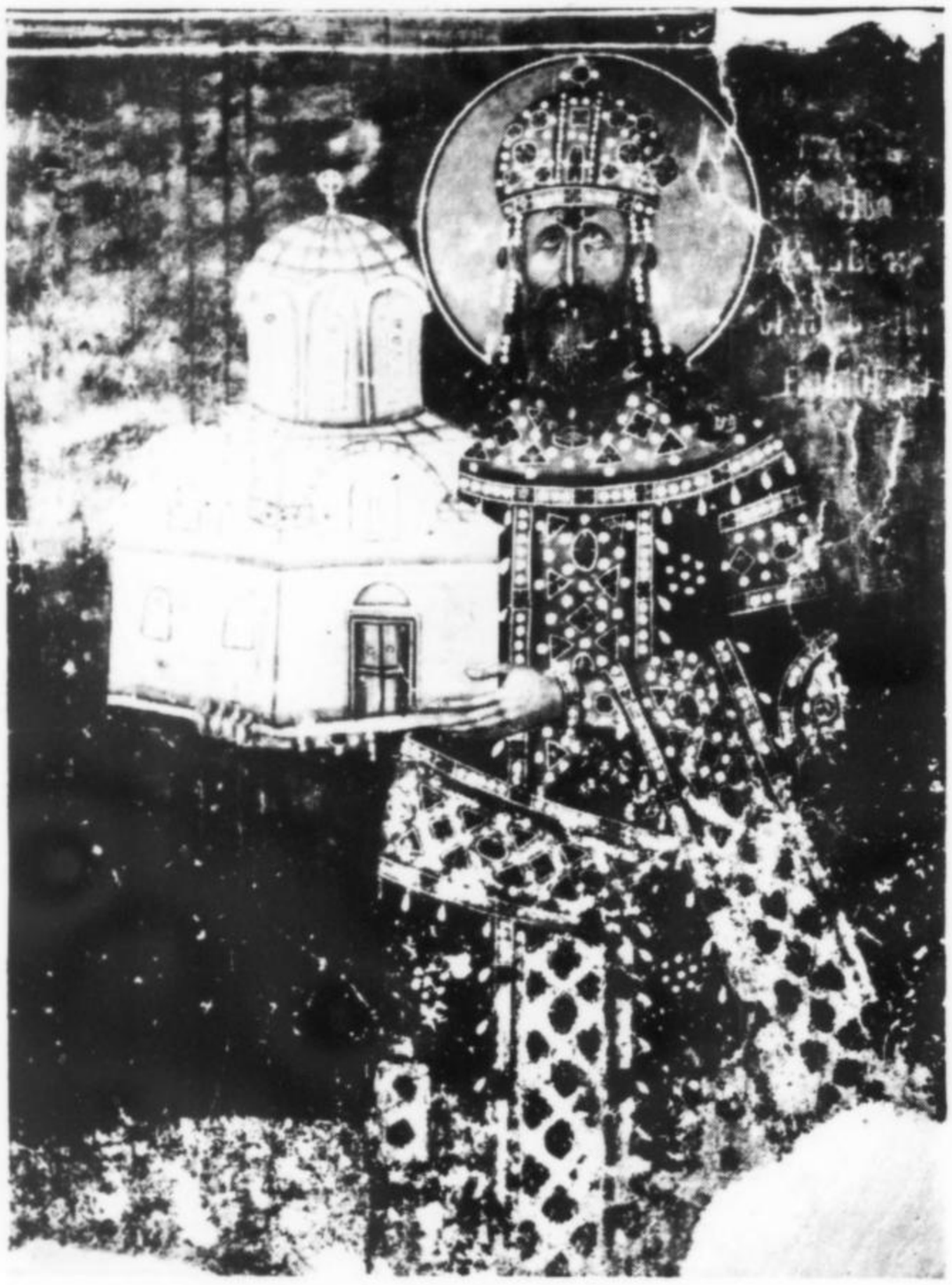


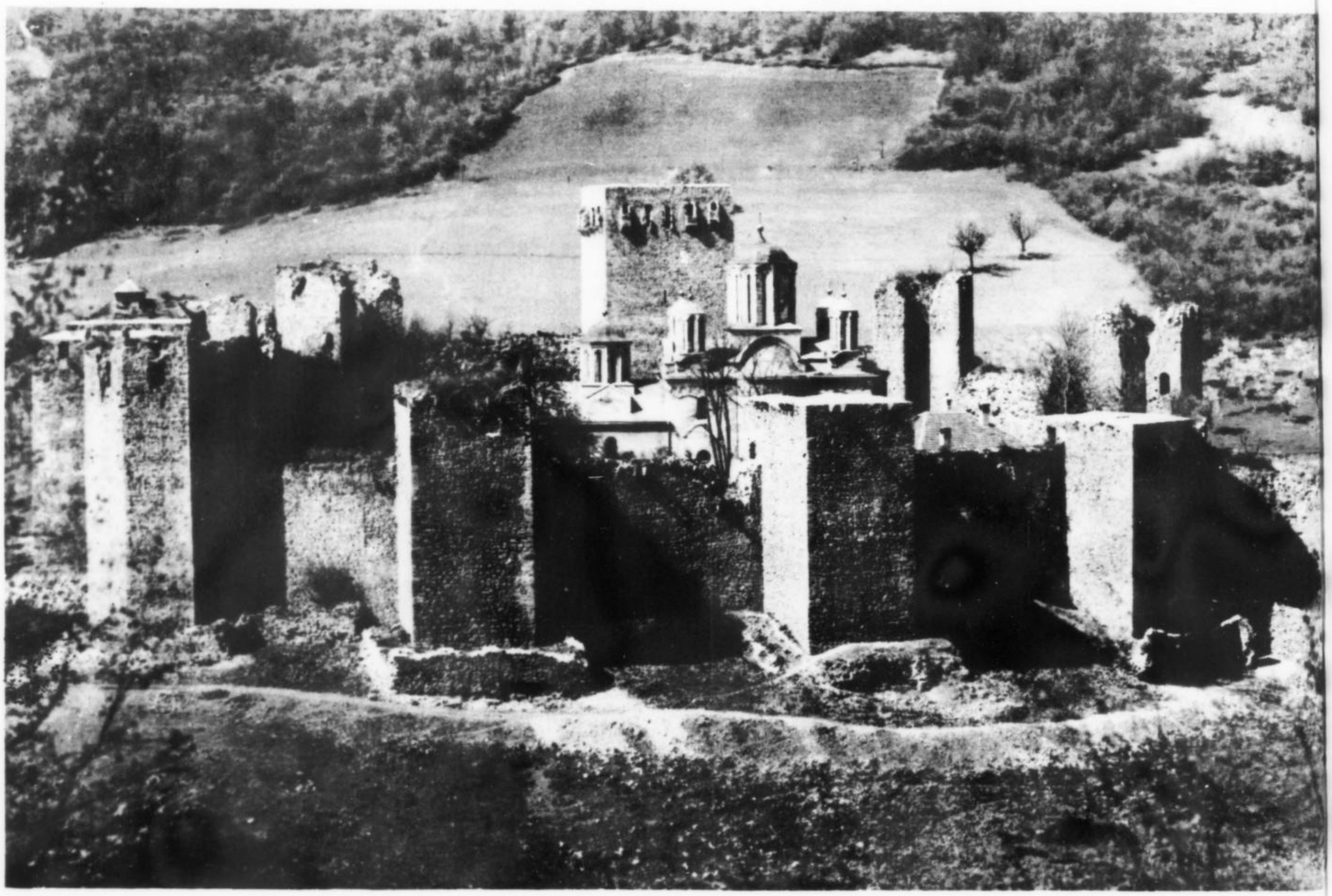
Fresco showing King Radoslav carrying a model of the church he built in the 13th century at Studenica.

Monastery of Manasija (early 15th century). Like many others of that time it was surrounded by high, fortress-like walls.

Byzantine art is generally characterized by a severity and formality of design, the medieval artists of Yugoslavia showed remarkable originality in departing on many occasions from the rigid stylization of their time. They instilled in their works elements of freshness, realism and rhythm. They portrayed their figures as human beings, vibrant with life, with individualized faces and "normal" eyes instead of the usual fixed gaze. In the 12th century, they gave the art of the fresco a new direction imparting to it both greater flexibility and expressiveness.

This more humanistic approach is well illustrated by the wall paintings dating from 1164 found in the little Macedonian church of Nerezi, near Skopje, which was built at the same period as Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Here, in the various scenes of the Passion—the Descent from the Cross, the Entombment and the Mourning of the Virgin—the Nerezi painters have captured feeling and emotion, sadness and compassion with striking vividness. In the Entombment, for example, contrary to the ecclesiastic codes of the time, the Virgin is seated with Christ tightly held in her arms, her face pressed against his head. This face expresses the supreme suffering of a mother weeping over her dead son.

In scenes such as these of death and suffering, human beings racked by pain or deeply moved by compassion have been portrayed with such force and realism that André Grabar, author of a profound study on "Byzantine Painting" and professor of Byzantine



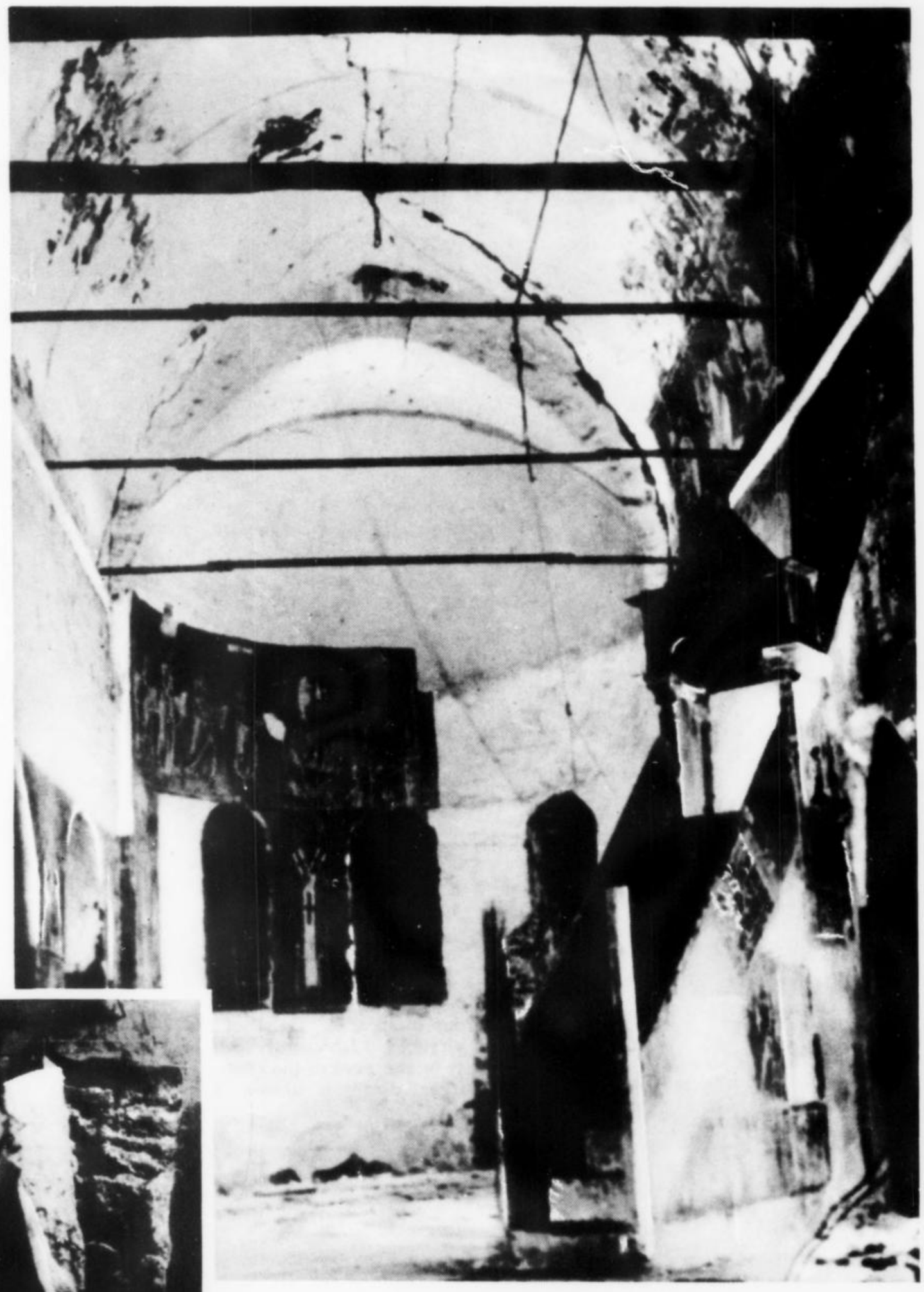
history at the famed College de France, has described them as "a landmark in the history of European painting" and "in advance of all European paintings of the same period."

The 13th and 14th centuries saw the development of a definite Serbian school of fresco painters, the most notable examples of their work being found in churches and monasteries at Milesevo, Sopocani, Gracanica and Studenica.

Serbian painting probably reached its greatest height in the 13th century in the monumental frescoes of the monastery of Sopocani. The Death of the Virgin, for example (see reproductions, page 34) would deserve to be included in any history of art. The human qualities which are portrayed, the feeling of grandiose effect and the dignity of the draped figures; these and the manner in which each figure is drawn with individual psychological expressiveness and an everyday realism, have led one critic to call it "the most brilliant example of what 13th century artists achieved by way of a return to nature."

The oldest frescoes of Yugoslavia are only now coming to light. They have been discovered in the picturesque lake shore town of Ochrida in mountainous southwest Macedonia. There, on the walls and vaults of the Church of Saint Sophia, paintings dating back to the early 11th century have been uncovered during the past four years which are an artistic discovery of the first order.

Not only do these frescoes reflect accurately the various phases in the construction of the church itself, but since they are representative of a broad period ranging from the 11th to the 14th century, they offer something that is distinctly rare — a general view of the development of Byzantine expression through the course of several hundreds of years in a region that was of capital importance in the evolution of Byzantine art.



Chancel of St Sophia of Ochrida as it appeared at start of restoration. Most of its frescoes were still hidden under plaster. Working on high scaffolding, experts patiently removed the coating from the roof and (as shown on page 39) brought paintings to light. To remove some paintings (inset) canvas covered with strong glue was applied to wall, and painting with backing of thin plaster was then peeled off, like the skin of an orange.

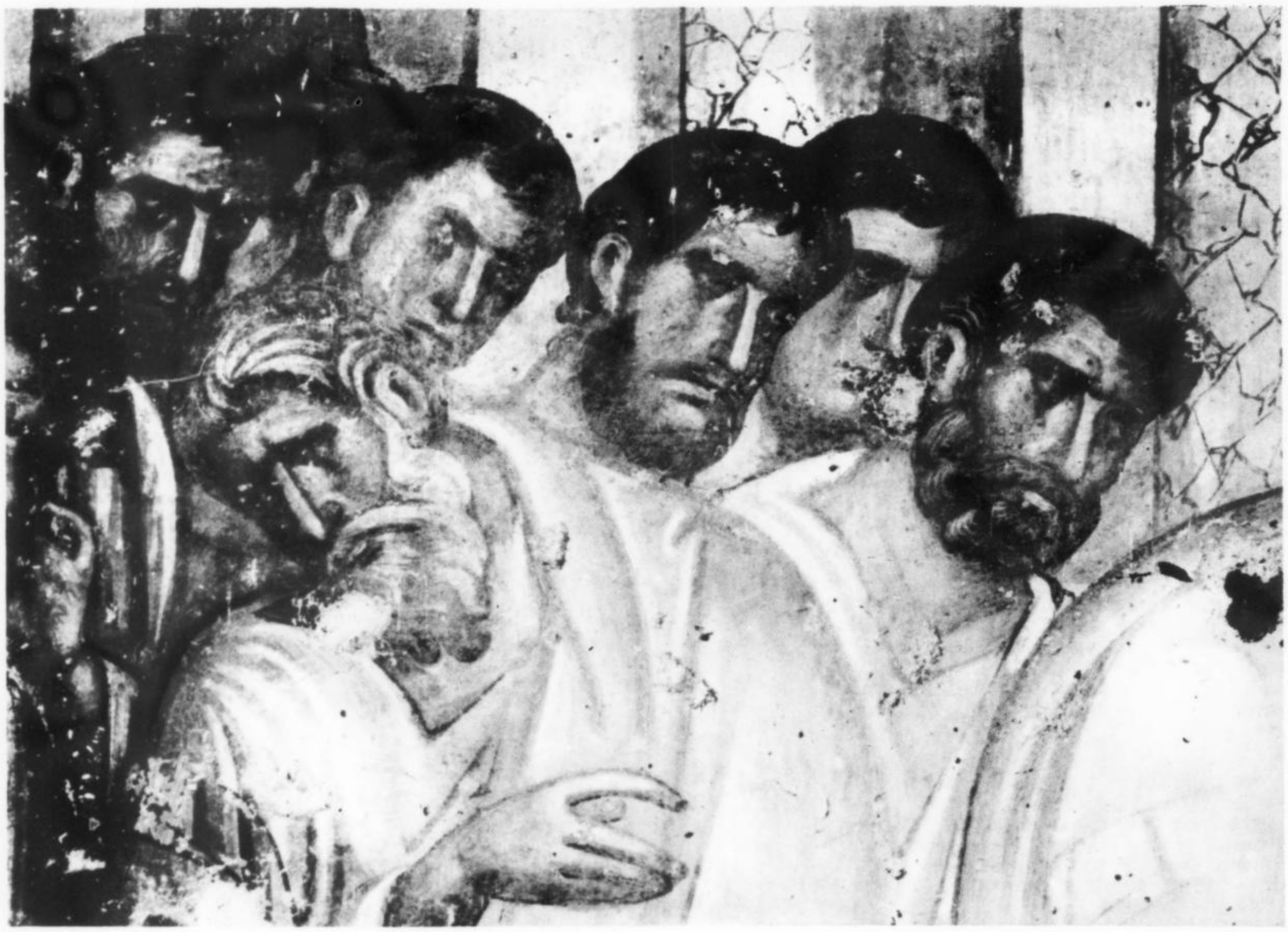
The Church of St. Sophia of Ochrida is one of the most important and ancient religious buildings surviving in Macedonia. It is remarkable for the delicately proportioned lines of its architecture as well as for its frescoes. Its graceful two storey galleried arcade, added in the 14th century, brings to mind contemporary Venetian buildings. The church is at least 900 years old and may have been begun a thousand years ago, though its exact date of construction or its founder is not known.

Age, dampness and neglect, however, have damaged St. Sophia considerably. Sometime before the 17th century fire destroyed a part of the church. The Ottomans, who had transformed it into a mosque in 1466, restored the damaged portion and rebuilt the roof. But it was so heavy that it buckled the vaults and pushed out the walls. Later, at an undetermined date, the vaulting and cupolas caved in. In 1913, a year after the end of Ottoman rule, the people of Ochrida re-roofed the church, again putting excessive pressure on the walls.

Various attempts to restore Saint Sophia were made afterwards, some of them harmfully bungling. In 1950, an Historic Monuments Commission of the People's Republic of Macedonia (one of the six Federal Republics of present-day Yugoslavia) made a preliminary study of the damage.

In many places they found the foundations too weak to hold up the superstructure, masonry had crumbled away, beams had rotted, walls and arches had buckled. The south wall, containing many frescoes, was in the worst shape. Because of the complexity of the problem, the Yugoslav government asked Unesco to send an advisory mission which arrived in December 1951. Ferdinando Forlatti, an Italian architect and Superintendent of Monuments at Venice, who had successfully tackled similar problems in restoring the Venetian Palazzo dei Trecente, led the mission. The director of the Central Institute for Restoration of Rome, Cesare Brandi, and Yves Froidevaux, chief architect in charge of historic monuments in Paris, accompanied him. Working with Yugoslav experts, the Unesco mission

(Continued on page 36)



A group of apostles. Detail of the Death of the Virgin, a 13th century painting of rare quality in the nave of the church at Sopocani. A larger detail is shown below, right.

The presentation of the Virgin in the temple. Detail of fresco in the church at Studenica, built by King Milutin in 1314. In upper right of painting the Virgin is being fed by an angel.

St. Bazil officiating at the Mass. Fresco in the church of St. Sophia at Ochrida (11th century).

Young girl pouring water. Fragment of the Nativity of Christ in the church of Sopocani

Pietá, one of the episodes of the Passion, painted in 1164 in the church at Nerezi.

made a month-long investigation of the church and drew up recommendations for restoring Saint Sophia and its frescoes. (1)

The delicate job of saving the church and its paintings began almost at once. The Yugoslav government asked Mr. Forlatti to stay on and direct the work along with the Yugoslav architect-engineer, Boris Cipan, Director of the Institute for the Protection of Historical Monuments of the Republic of Macedonia.

Straightening out the south wall of Saint Sophia was probably the hardest job. The whole wall leaned outward and at one end there was a bad jagged break. The Unesco mission recommended that a complicated arrangement of heavy beams and strong cables be built to snag the jag back into place and then straighten up and back the wall. (See diagram below).

The preparations for this took two months. Workmen set about building a giant wood and iron rectangular frame, 90 feet long, around the wall of the church, the idea being that as the steel cables were tightened the frame would straighten out the wall. On May 2, 1953, Yugoslav and Italian directors were ready. In two hours the jag was straightened. Two days later, two hours again were enough to pull the wall back to support the roof.

The special repairs made to the walls consisted mainly of boring and filling holes with a cement specially resistant to humidity. This was carried out with a tool operated on the principle of a syringe—a new instrument which had been developed in Italy.

But before any of this work could be started, the frescoes had to be removed. In the past, frescoes were painted on thin coats of plaster spread over a layer of finely mixed sand, clay and sometimes even mud covering the stone or brick walls. The artist painted his picture, or such sections of it as time permitted, on the thin plaster layer while it was still moist. As the picture dried it became an integral part of the wall.

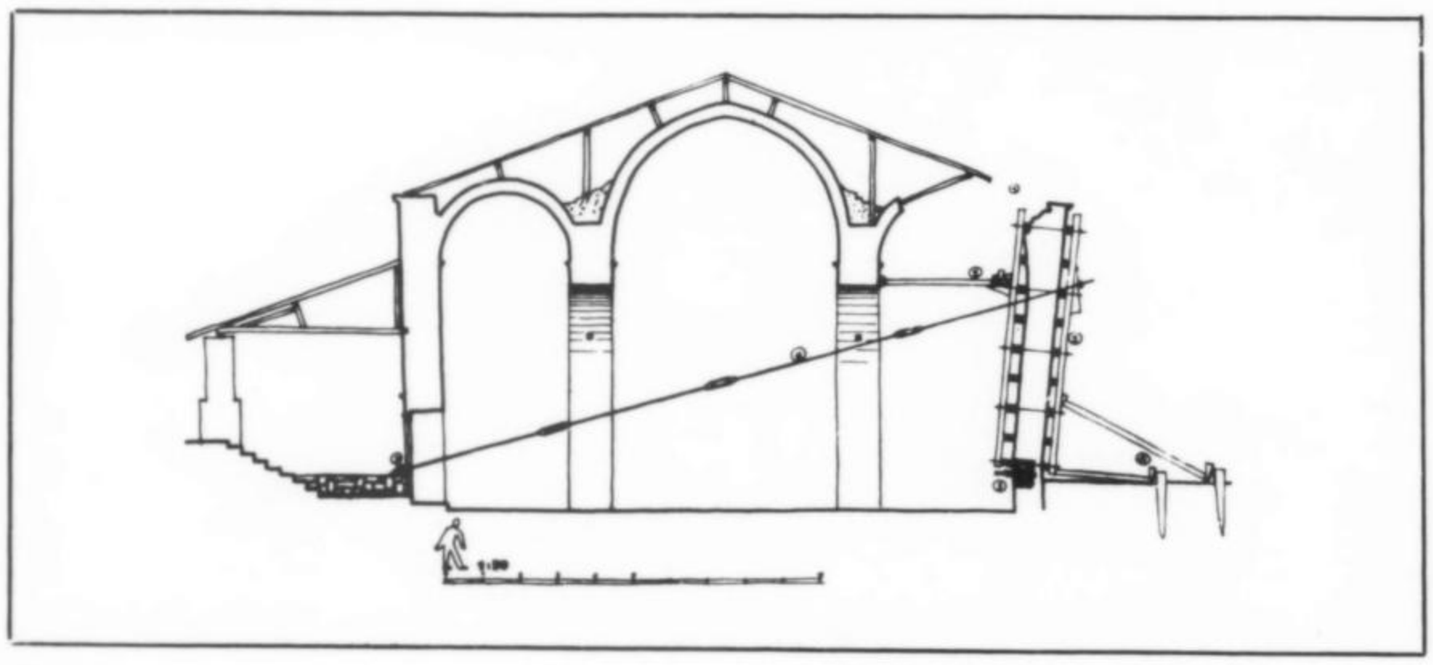
For the damaged frescoes of St. Sophia careful incisions were made in the outer plaster to get at the sand-clay mortar behind. Then the paintings were lifted off in sections with their mortar backing. For the undamaged frescoes a special glue was spread on canvas and the canvas was applied to the wall. The mural was then peeled off like the skin of an orange, with the thin layer of plaster holding the colour.

Once off the walls, the murals were specially treated and the mortar thinned down, sometimes to as little as two-tenths of an inch, after which they were placed on new, strong wood bases and remounted on the walls. Thus far more than 600 square metres of frescoes have been uncovered in the church. On certain walls, it was found that several layers of paintings existed which thus presented a rare panorama of the development of the Macedonian school of Byzantine art in the most compact space possible.

The restoration of Saint Sophia of Ochrida has been an excellent example of international co-operation between specialists which Unesco seeks to foster—this time between artists, architects, archaeologists and engineers. These contacts have led to others. Experts from Yugoslavia have recently visited Italy and France to study restoration methods, and Italian and French specialists have gone to Yugoslavia to investigate the great treasures that have now been revealed by the restoration work still in operation and scheduled for completion in 1955. Such contacts contribute towards a better knowledge of the common values of the past, and to a better understanding of the cultures of different peoples which are Unesco's major goals. The album of colour reproductions on the medieval frescoes of Yugoslavia's churches in Unesco's World Art Series is another step in the same direction.

Centuries ago when this fresco in the Church of the Virgin at Prizen was covered with plaster, cuts were made in the wall to fix the coating. Today the painting has been restored, but its wounds are still apparent. Most of the paintings published with this article are reproduced in colour in Unesco's Volume on Yugoslav frescoes.

(1) "St Sophia of Ochrida - Preservation and Restoration of the Building and its Frescoes" is the report published by the mission in Unesco's Museums and Monuments Series. Volume IV, 1953. Illustrated. $ 1.00 .



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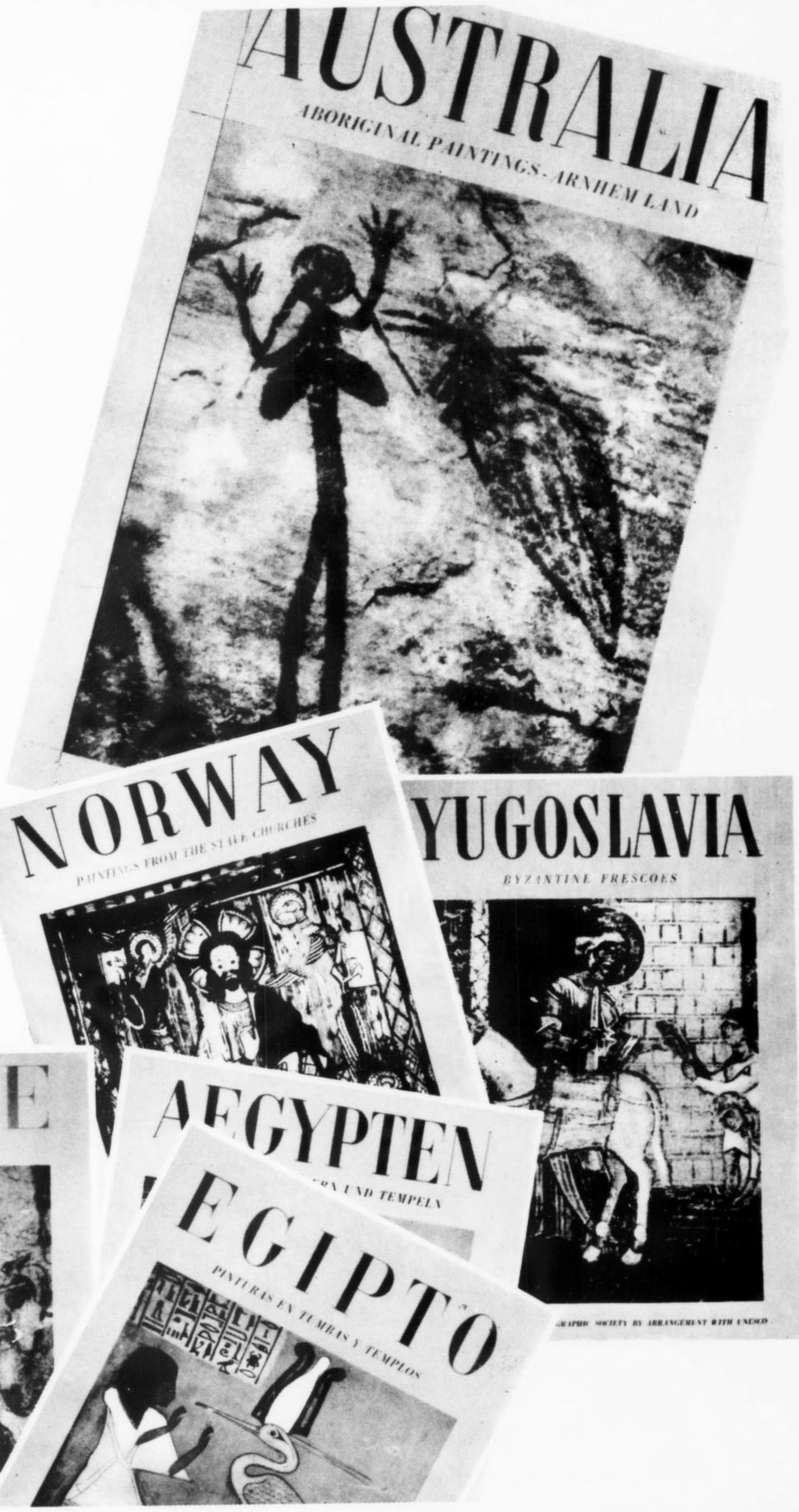

From the Unesco Newsroom...

UNESCO'S MONTEVIDEO CONFERENCE

WHEN the flags of Unesco's 72 Member States were lowered for the last time before the Palacio Legislativo in Montevideo, Uruguay, the Eighth Session of the Unesco General Conference had an impressive list of precedent-setting achievements behind it.

During a four-week meeting ending December 11, the Conference had adopted the highest budget in the history of the United Nations agency and laid down a new Unesco programme with an accent on basic issues where the future of the world in which we live is at stake.

This was the first Unesco General Conference to be attended by delegations from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Byelorussia and the Ukraine. Contributions from these new Member States are largely responsible for the Conference's decision to raise Unesco's budget for 1955 and 1956 to a total of $21,617,000—an increase of 15 per cent over the 1953-54 budget of $18,752,000.

This Conference, the first to be held in South America, passed three joint resolutions which will have a profound effect on Unesco's programme.

The first, proposed by France, India and Japan and voted unanimously, instructed the Secretariat to co-operate with the U. N. and its Specialized Agencies in studying the peaceful uses of atomic energy and to disseminate "objective information concerning the dangers and the practical utilization of atomic energy". In addition, Unesco will now study ways of facilitating the use of radio-isotopes in research and industry.

The second put the Conference on record as declaring its "faith in the possibility of resolving all tensions by peaceful means" and ordered Unesco to undertake "an objective study of the means of promoting peaceful co-operation in accordance with aims expressed in the Unesco Constitution". It had been proposed by three countries—India, Czechoslovakia and the United States.

The third resolution condemned the use of press, radio or films to "provoke or encourage any threat to the peace" and asked "all Member States of Unesco to take necessary measures to assure freedom of expression and to remove barriers to the free flow of undistorted information between Member States." Adopted unanimously, it had been presented jointly, by Canada, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Ecuador, France, India, Lebanon, Mexico, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

These two last resolutions were termed by Dr Luther H. Evans, Unesco Director-General, in a message on Human Rights Day, as "ample proof of the lessening of international tensions of which, I am sure, the present Unesco Conference is a living proof."

In the programme adopted by the Conference, the 15 per cent budgetary increase is to be used almost entirely for projects meeting specific needs of Unesco Member States.

Examples of such projects are the use of radio broadcasting in adult education, Unesco aid in producing reading materials for new literates, international scientific co-operation centres, an international centre for research on social problems of industrialization in South Asia, the training of fundamental education leaders in museum techniques, and Unesco support of scientific research into such fields as the problems of the world's arid zones.

In addition, Unesco's 1955-56 programme contains provisions for technical aid to Member States on specific problems of education, communications, science and the organization of libraries and museums. This technical aid is over and above Unesco's participation in the United Nations world programme of technical assistance for economic development. Under this latter programme, Unesco now has 140 educators and scientists working in 36 countries.

The General Conference also acted on a heavy administrative agenda. Among major decisions was a vote to change the nature of Unesco's Executive Board which shapes the policy of the Organization in between Conference sessions. Board members will now represent their governments instead of serving as individuals.

Following this decision, the Conference then elected an entirely new Executive Board with 22 members, two more than in the past. Countries now represented on the Board are Brazil, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, France, the German Federal Republic, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Liberia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Spain, Thailand, the U.R.S.S., the United States, the United Kingdom and Uruguay.

In one of its final decisions, the Conference voted that its next meeting, in two years, will be held in New Delhi, India.

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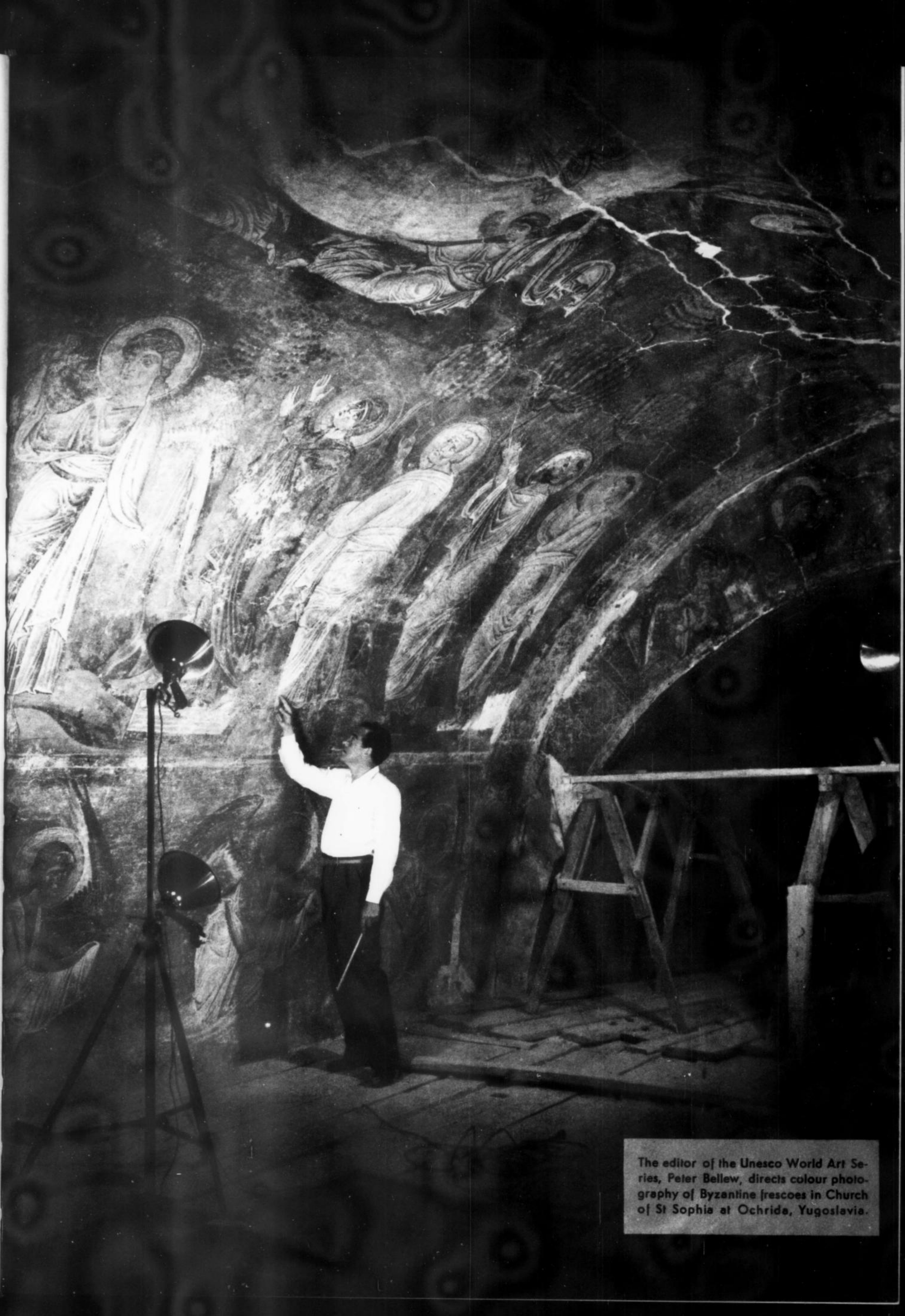

The editor of the Unesco World Art Series, Peter Bellew, directs colour photography of Byzantine frescoes in Church of St Sophia at Ochrida, Yugoslavia.

From the U'nesco volume: "Australia - Aboriginal Paintings - Arnhem Land"